

BHARATH

An Epic of the Dugri Bhils

Documented and Edited by Bhagwandas Patel

Translated by Nila Shah



Central Institute of Indian Languages

and

Bhasha Research and Publication Centre

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Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	v, ix
<i>Preface by Bhagwandas Patel</i>	xxii
<i>The Tale Never Ends by Nila Shah</i>	xxvi
Bharath	
Ganga and Satraja	3
Gatarpa and Kutma	27
Pandu, the King	42
Karan, the Pandav	48
Dhofa and Vasat	68
Dhofa and Bhemjhal	101
Bhakti	111
Sanctaro Yagna	122
Bhemjhal	173
Kasna Avtar in the Land of the Danavs	193
Iko, the Danav Prince	207
Balo Himmat	216
Narad and the Kaurav Princes	236
Indrani and Balo Himmat	238
Viyor Velaro, the King	251

Distribution of Land	266
Getting Prepared for Bharath	274
Declaration of War	286
Episode of Antra, the Princess	299
Bharath	334
Arjhan's Grief	340
Episode of Kasma Avtar and Arjhan	348
Mamara of Dharma's Daughter	370
The Advent of Kaliyug	394
The Pandavs on their Way to the Hemala	410
Notes	414
Glossary	419

Foreword

‘I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any... I would have our young men and women... to learn as much of English and other world languages as they like, and then expect them to give the benefits of their learning to India and to the world.... But I would not have a single Indian to forget, neglect or be ashamed of his mother tongue, or to feel that he or she cannot think or express the best thoughts in his or own vernacular.’

(Mahatma Gandhi on *English Learning*, *Young India* 01:06:1921)

Traditionally, India is viewed as a pluralistic society that is supportive of all languages—big or small. The Indian Constitution is committed to the language rights of all, including the right to mother tongue education. However, the education system has encouraged more the growth of dominant languages, and in practice, most of the smaller languages are not included. This has resulted in marginalization of diverse linguistic communities and enhanced the threat perceptions to their languages. If recent UNESCO reports are to be believed then we seem to have all kinds of language situations ranging from potentially endangered to those on the verge of extinction.

But the exact picture can only be given if serious research is undertaken to survey the socio-linguistic settings in all states and



native speakers are involved as partners to report from within. To safeguard these languages we also need to formulate clear cut plans for the empowerment of these languages and their speakers. This would involve linking languages with literacy, education, technology and economic opportunities. Fortunately, an institutional arrangement has been put in place to develop all Indian languages, regardless of their status as official languages or their inclusion in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

Bharatiya Bhasha Sansthan or Central Institute of Indian Languages was set up with its main objective being 'to assist in and coordinate the development of Indian languages, to bring about the essential unity of Indian languages through scientific study and inter-linguistic research and to promote the mutual enrichment of the languages and thus contribute towards emotional integration of the people of this country.' While spelling out its role as the nodal agency that will coordinate the endeavours of all language institutions, it was expected to function on several fronts including undertaking work that will 'promote the development of languages of Scheduled Tribes'. The Central Institute of Indian Languages has contributed immensely in this direction and its work on documentation, description and development of minor languages has given it the identity of an institution that values diversity even as it works to promote multilingualism with strong roots in mother tongue.

The Bhili mother tongues are an illustration of this commitment to treating all languages as equal. For years, the Central Institute of Indian Languages undertook experimental work with the Wagdi speaking tribes in Rajasthan and in the process they produced bilingual primers, trained teachers, held orientation camps for administrators dealing with education of these tribes and undertook testing and evaluation work to demonstrate the worthiness of their pursuit of putting mother tongues as partners of official languages. The work was extended to include the Varli tribes in Dadra and Nagar Haveli, where both Dungar Varli and Davar Varli were linked



to Marathi and Gujarati respectively, and for years the states were involved to take up their cause. The fact that both the states did not adopt the materials and methods as part of their long term policy only illustrates how complex these issues are and how strong is the resistance to innovative ideas.

It is in these circumstances that the Central Institute of Indian Languages looks for partners who value our mission; and Bhasha Research and Publication Centre, founded by Ganesh Devy, in Vadodara, is one such trusted partner helping us to keep our vision intact. In their case, they have themselves taken the initiative to turn things around by producing materials that will be valued by the readers. The present collection of books that includes three epics in the original—*Gujrano Arelo*, *Rathod Varta* and *J Ramsitmani Varta*—and three publications in English translation—*Bharath: An Epic of the Dungri Bhils*, *Rathod Varta: A Heroic Narrative of the Dungri Bhils* and *The Ramayan and other Oral Narratives of the Kunknas* is ample evidence of that spirit which is working for the empowerment of the smaller mother tongues. It is my hope that this work has been positive and has given the Bhil identity a positive value.

As the Census figures illustrate, the group of Bhili mother tongues (seventeen mother tongues are listed in 2001 with more than 10,000 speakers for each) has shown a sudden spurt in its growth from 26% (1971 to 1981) to 29% (1981-1991) to a dramatic 71% (1991-2001).

Decadal Growth of Bhili Mother Tongues (source Census 2001)

Bhili/Bhilodi -17 mother tongues

Decadal Growth (No. of Speakers)

1971	1981	1991	2001
3,399,285	4,293,314	5,572,308	9,582,957

Percentage wise Decadal Growth

1971-81	1981-91	1991-2001
26.30	29.79	71.97



When the statistics are juxtaposed against the reports of *UNESCO Atlas on Endangered Languages 2009*, where none of the Bhili mother tongues are shown as endangered, the case study becomes even more interesting of a language and its people who want to affirm their presence on the Indian landscape. Being the largest non-scheduled language, their languages must be put on the firm path of development for they have survived the test of time. Teachers who work with these communities must make an effort to understand these mother tongues and enhance their own multilingual competence.

I hope these books will pave way for their democratic participation on a larger scale and with a sense of dignity they deserve. Eklavya was a determined Bhil who was willing to give up a piece of his hand in gratitude to his teacher but not to abandon the archery and the shooting arrow that always found its mark, and his skills leapt to greater heights in keeping, with his soaring spirits.

We wish the readers a good time to draw inwards and discover the strength of their own world.

Rajesh Sachdeva
Director
Central Institute of Indian Languages



In being able to present to the literary world the complete English version of the *Mahabharata* of the Dungri Bhils residing on the border between Gujarat and Rajasthan, I feel delighted beyond words. This great poem, one of the epics that the Adivasis in Western India have created and kept alive through oral rendition, has existed in the literary tradition of the Dungri Bhils for centuries. In their tradition it is known as *Bharath*. It was documented and made available to the Gujarati literary world in an excellent scholarly edition by Dr. Bhagwandas Patel. The Gujarati *Bhilonu Gujarat* has been in existence for over two decades. When I was preparing the Sahitya Akademi series of Indian Literature in Tribal Languages, I had the good fortune to be able to bring out the Hindi version of the epic. It is most gratifying that the English version of the *Bharath* of the Bhils is now being published. This particular version is a joint endeavour of Dr. Bhagwandas Patel, the scholar who has devoted his exemplary life to documenting the oral traditions of Gujarat, and Dr. Nila Shah, who has taken to translating tribal literary works as her passion.

The publication of *Bharath* in English version will surely be seen, long after our time, as a landmark in the cultural history of India. The *Mahabharata*, in its various versions, has without question been the most seminal cultural text throughout the history of India. Therefore, when the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute produced a 'standard' version of the epic during the twentieth century, it came to be seen as one of the most significant events in modern India's intellectual history. However, by the time the Bhandarkar Institute's *variorum* version appeared, the Sanskrit oral tradition of Mahabharata recitation had already been a thing of the past. In the case of the Bhili *Bharath*, it is worth noting that the epic belongs to a



living oral tradition. Therefore, the experience of reading it in English has a unique excitement about it.

While reading the epic, one is likely to ask in astonishment as to why it has so far remained unnoticed. If the visibility of tribal languages has remained somewhat poor, those languages need not be blamed for the want of creativity. The responsibility rests with the received idea that literature in order to be literature has to be written and printed as well. Tribal literary traditions have been oral in nature. After the print technology started impacting Indian languages during the nineteenth century, the fate of the oral became precarious. A gross cultural neglect had to be faced by the languages which remained outside the print technology. The reorganization of Indian states after Independence was along the linguistic lines. The languages that had scripts came to be counted for. The ones that had not acquired scripts, and therefore did not have printed literature, did not get their own states. Schools and colleges were established only for the official languages. The ones without scripts, even if they had stock of wisdom carried forward orally, were not fortunate enough to get into educational institutions. It is in this context of gross neglect that one has to understand the creativity in India's tribal languages.

The history of tribals during the last sixty years is filled with stories of forced displacement, land alienation and increasing marginalization, eruption of violence and the counter-violence by the state. Going by any parameters of development, the tribals always figure at the tail end. The situation of the communities that have been pastoral or nomadic has been even worse. Considering the immense odds against which tribals have been fighting, it is not short of a miracle that they have preserved their languages and continue to contribute to the amazing linguistic diversity of India.

The number of languages in which Indian tribal communities have been expressing themselves is amazingly large. Though there



are the usual problems associated with marking of the mother tongue in a multilingual society, the successive Census figures indicate that there exist nearly ninety languages with speech communities of ten thousand or more. When one speaks of Indian tribal literature, one is necessarily speaking of all of these.

Some twenty years ago, I decided to approach the languages such as Kunkna, Bhili, Gondi, Mizo, Garo, Santhali, Kinnauri, Garhwali, Dehwali, Warli, Pawri and so on, expecting to find at the most a few hundred songs and stories in them. Having documented over a ten thousand printed pages of these, and publishing a dozen magazines and fifty odd books containing tribal imaginative expression, I am a much humbled person. If a systematic publication programme were created to document tribal literature in India, easily several hundred titles can be launched just containing the oral traditions in them. The story does not end here.

In recent years, tribals have taken to writing. Many tribal languages now have their own scripts or have taken recourse to the state scripts. Some four decades ago, when Dalit literature started drawing the nation's attention towards it, it was usual to think of even the tribal writers among them, as part of the Dalit movement. In Marathi, for instance, Atmaram Rathod, Laxman Mane, Laxman Gaikwad, all from nomadic tribal communities, were hailed as Dalit writers. At that time, the north-east was no more than a rumour for the rest of India. One was perhaps aware of the monumental collections presented by Verrier Elwin, but there was no inkling of the tribal creativity. It is only during the last twenty years that various tribal voices and works have started making their presence felt. Thus, *Kochereti* from Kerala and *Alma Kabutri* from the north surprised the readers almost the same time when Lalitluangliana Khiangte's anthology of Mizo Literature and Govind Chatak's anthology of Garhwali literature appeared in English and Hindi translation, respectively, making it possible for me to bring out *Painted Words*, a national anthology of tribal literature.



The last two decades have demonstrated that tribal literature is no longer merely folk songs and folk tales. It now encompasses other complex genres such as the novel and drama. Daxin Bajarange's Budhan Theatre in Ahmedabad has been producing stunningly refreshing plays, modern in form and contemporary in content. Little magazines such as *Chhattisgarhi Lokakshar*, *Dhol* and *Lakhara* have started appearing which provide space for tribal poets and writers. Literary conferences providing a platform for tribal writers are being frequently held at various places in the country. International conferences under the title 'Chotro' devoted to tribal literature and culture, have been held over the last five years.

There is now a greater understanding among tribal activists all over the country that tribal identity and culture cannot be preserved unless the tribal languages and literature are foregrounded. Over the last four decades, a mainstream writer like Mahasveta Devi has been writing on behalf of the tribals. That situation has now changed. The voice of the tribals themselves is now beginning to be heard. The contribution made by Dr. Bhagwandas Patel to the emergence of the new literary energy has been the most significant. He has kept bringing to light one after another, seminal expressions of tribal imagination over the last thirty years. In doing this he has also managed to rescue Folklore Studies from its colonial entrapment. In that sense, he should be seen as an able successor of the great Gujarati writer Jhaverchand Meghani as well as Verrier Elwin. His contribution has established that in the amazingly rich tapestry of Indian literary creativity, an important strand has been the lyrical and narrative traditions of tribal communities and the picaresque narratives constructed by the pastoral communities.

Just as the initial construction of histories of the ancient and modern Indian languages was carried out by the colonial scholars enaged in Asiatic Studies, the initial portrayal of the adivasis and their literary traditions comes to us from the works of Verrier Elwin. From 1932 to the very end of his life, Elwin spent over three decades



living among the adivasis, serving them, learning their languages and culture, documenting oral traditions, preparing policy documents, advising the government on tribal issues and writing about them. The turbulent years of the freedom movement and the World War formed the backdrop of Elwin's work. After arriving in India, Elwin did not return to England for any long spells, and all these other sides of his life increasingly kept becoming far less significant for him in comparison to his profound attraction for the tribal communities and his deep emotional ties with them. He liked to describe his life philosophy as the philosophy of love:

Love and duties it imposes is the real lesson of the forest... Among very poor and exploited people there was the need to maintain those imponderable values that give dignity to the life of man; to restore them their self-respect, the feeling of being loved... There was the need for reverence, reverence for all life... (*The Works of Verrier Elwin*, OUP, Delhi, 1988, 348)

It was the sequential unfolding of his many-sided love for the adivasis through an intimate engagement with them that led to Elwin's production of such mighty works as *The Baiga*, *The Agariya*, *Maria Murder and Suicide*, *Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal*, *Folk-Songs of Chattisgarh*, *The Muria and the Ghotul*, *The Tribal Art of Middle India*, *The Myths of Middle India*, *Songs of the Forest*, *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, *Leaves from the Jungle*, *The Aborigines* and *Bondo Highlanders*. Had Elwin's style possessed no literary charm, had his prose not reflected an alluring personality, had he not lavished such profound love on the communities that he researched, and had he not belonged to an exciting era, even then just the wealth of information that Elwin's numerous works contain would have made his contribution phenomenal. His involvement with them went far beyond an anthropological dedication, aesthetic fascination or altruistic community work. However, Elwin's works were all in English, and



while they made an impact on the government's 'tribal' policy, they did not result in initiating any 'adivasi language movement'. The work of Dr. Bhagwandas Patel has led to an awakening in Gujarati literary circles that has opened new horizons in literary history. Mainly, the imaginative expression of the Adivasis is now being respectably domesticated within Gujarati letters. The first decade of the present century is marked in Indian literature by the emergence of the expression of the voice of the tribal communities. Throughout the first decade there has been a remarkable manifestation of this voice through little magazines in various languages. Previously, the literary creativity of the tribal communities came to us solely through the recordings made by anthropologists, linguists and folklorists. Besides, the translations through which the folklore was rendered were largely unreadable. Perhaps, the only exception was of the works by Verrier Elwin. In a way, the imaginative life of the 'janajatis', as the official term likes to describe them, or the *Adivasis* of India has remained inaccessible to the rest of India.

The social isolation and marginalization of the Adivasis began during the colonial times. When the Portuguese arrived in India they developed a descriptive apparatus for referring to Indian communities by coining the term 'tribe'. The term was drawn from ancient Roman practice of describing the speakers of peripheral languages as 'tribes'. The British refined the concept further and started using the term only for those communities that did not show state formation as the central feature of social organization. Understandably, these 'tribes' were the forest dwellers, untouched by capital economy and without urbanized habitat. In the 1870s, communities singled out by the colonial British were enumerated and a list of Indian tribes was created. Another list pertaining to nomadic communities was drawn up as the list of Criminal Tribes (1871). Prior to the colonial intrusion in the life of these communities, they had a close engagement with the rest of Indian society in terms of cultural production. Many of India's major dance



styles originated among them. It is believed that an epic like the *Ramayana* was composed by a forest dweller; and as far as the origin of fiction writing in India is concerned, it is a historical fact that the *Kathasaritasagar* or *Ocean of Stories* of Gunadhya was written in Paisachik, or what the colonial British would have described as a tribal language. This dialogical cultural relation was snapped forever due to colonial anthropological engineering.

During the early part of the twentieth century when the Dalits started registering their voice in Indian literature, the Adivasis kept themselves entirely within the confines of their oral tradition of epics, stories and songs. In fact, it took a sympathetic observer like Verrier Elwin to articulate on behalf of the tribals, for they themselves remained quiet. Even after Independence, the fiction of the Adivasis had to find expression through the writings of Gopinath Mohanty and Mahasveta Devi, who were tremendously sympathetic to the plight of the Adivasis but were not *Adivasis* themselves. In comparison, Dr. Patel's rendering of the creative expression and narratives of Adivasis, without overshadowing them by his own rich literary talent and style, stands out as a contribution far more sensitive and pioneering.

The *Bharath* of the Bhils is obviously a cultural monument, but its greater value lies in its ability to foreground the community that has been facing untold material disadvantage. By drawing attention to the community and its creativity, Dr. Patel has accomplished what Pablo Neruda did by writing about the lost world of Macchu Picchu, or W. B. Yeats did by calling into his poetry the Irish myth and folklore. Neruda writes:

Rise up to be born with me, brother.
 Give me your hand from the deep
 Zone seeded by your sorrow.
 You won't return from under the rocks.
 You won't return from your subterranean time.



Your hardened voice won't return.
 Your gouged-out eyes won't return.
 Look at me from the depth of the earth,
 laborer, weaver, silent shepherd:
 tamer of wild llamas like spirit images:
 construction worker on a daring scaffold:
 waterer of the tears of the Andes:
 jeweler with broken fingers:
 farmer trembling as you sow:
 potter, poured out into your clay:
 bring to the cup of this new life
 your old buried sorrows.
 Show me your blood and your furrow,
 Tell me, "Here I was punished,
 Because the jewel didn't shine or the earth
 Didn't yield grain or stones on time."
 Show me the stone you fell over
 And the wood on which they crucified you,
 Make a spark from the old flints for me,
 For the old lamps to show the whips still stuck
 After centuries in the old wounds
 And the axes shining with blood.
 I come to speak for your dead mouth.

(*The Heights of Macchu Picchu*, XII)

Dr. Patel's recovery of Bharath, the epic of the Bhils, should be of great interest to scholars of Indian culture, as the Adivasi epic provides a text to compare with the *Mahabharata*, as it is normally known through the 'standard' version brought into circulation after the Bhandarkar Institute edition was published.



A. K. Ramanujan once remarked that in India everyone knows the *Mahabharata* because no one reads it. Indians, old or young, in cities or in villages, think that they know the *Mahabharata*. Indians have a great sense of confidence that they know the epic even though rarely does one get to see the poem in print. It is widely believed that it is inauspicious to keep copies of the entire text at home. Most Indians in urban and semi-urban areas have seen the *Mahabharata* on the television screen; and many get to hear oral renderings of some of the main episodes.

Till the early part of the twentieth century, the tradition of Mahabharata recitation during the winter months continued in most parts of the country; but during the last few decades, the votaries of the oral epic traditions have become rare. At present, one's access to the epic has become somewhat reduced. Children get to know it through the illustrated story books, and adults get to 'see' it enacted on the television screen. And yet, we all like to believe that we know the *Mahabharata*.

No other imaginative composition, no other literary work, has held so much sway over such vast numbers and over such a long time span as the *Mahabharata* has done. And clearly, no other epic anywhere in the world has been so substantially been an integral part of a people's emotional life as this epic.

It is said that an epic is a poem of a century. But, that is an understatement. Epics do not get written in every century, or what is written as epic even if very long poems, do not necessarily acquire the status of an epic. An epic is that poem anywhere in the world and anytime in history which gets constructed at the beginning of a civilization. There are the Greek epics *Iliad* and *Odyssey* whose authorship is ascribed to Homer. Most of the western mythology originates in those epics. However, a different order of mythology in the west originates in the Biblical tradition. Yet western modernity has eclipsed the Homeric mythology to a great extent. That is not



the case with the *Mahabharata*. Similarly, Virgil's *Aeneid* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*, though they continue to be seen as classics, no longer provide the modern west with any organic cultural links. John Milton's *Paradise Lost* exists today only as a classroom text for the students of literature; and even they do not get to read the companion epic, *Paradise Regained*. This has been the story of numerous Indian poems, composed by their authors as epics. Sri Aurobindo spent nearly four decades working on his *Savitri*, and Vinayak Krishna Gokak composed a long poem in Kannada. While in literary circles these poems have come to be seen as significant texts, they did not acquire the status of epics in the minds of the common people in India. However, much larger, however more experimental, more challenging, more beautiful than may be, an epic is the poem, one and the only one, which emerged at the beginning of a civilization.

A new civilization is not just the arrival of a new race or a new language or a new education minister, or setting up of new universities and new towns, or just a change of seasons, warming or cooling. A new civilization marks itself when a pervasive epistemic change starts taking place. Knowledge is always based on the episteme. Episteme is the world view of the people who think that particular theories are appropriate to understand the material and the non-material phenomena of their times. The *Mahabharata* is one such epic, which tells us about the changing epistemies in our country. It will be interesting to see how scholars of Cultural Studies place the *Bharath* narrative in relation to the contemporary epistemic shifts. Similarly interesting it will be to see how scholars of Comparative Literature view *Bharath* in relation to the *Mahabharata*. The main story of the Bhili *Bharath* is the same as the main story of the *Mahabharata*. But there are episodes which are distinctly different. The *Gita* is not included in the Bhili *Bharath*. The Satyavan and Savitri episode and the Nala Damyanti episode do not come in the Bhili *Bharath*. The style and the local colour of *Bharath* clearly evoke the rural and tribal ethos, though the emotional economy of *Bharath*



is no less complex than that of the Sanskrit epic. It needs be pointed out in favour of the convergence between the two narratives that the relentless direct narration of Vyasa is also unmistakably the stylistic feature of *Bharath*. It is difficult to say if the similarity arises out of a common ancestry or if it is a result of comparable cultures providing the context for their respective creation. For example, one can see how unembellished the language is in the following passage, something reminiscent of Vyasa's characteristic style:

Once upon a time a frog embarked on a pilgrimage to the Ganges. On his way he came across a large city. He wandered around the marketplace and was stampeded on by a herd of free roaming cattle. As he died his soul entered the womb of a barren woman. She was the wife of a trader. In due course, after nine months and nine days, she gave birth to a male child. The boy grew up into a bright young man. The trader's son, now the grown up young man, then thought thus, 'What will I do at home? I must go seek a job. However, whose job should I seek? I must seek a job with some great man, and Indra is the greatest of them all. Hence if at all, I must seek employment with Indra only.' The trader's son thus went to Indrapuri. 'Why have you come here', Indra inquired. 'Which community do you belong to?' 'Sir, I have come to seek employment with you. I am the son of a trader,' the boy replied.

Indra duly employed the boy. He sought to instill smartness in the trader's son. Once as it so happened, the trader was sitting outside and cleaning his teeth. A maid came to do her chores in the marketplace. The trader, while brushing his teeth, thought, 'I must adopt this woman as my sister. However, what should I give her as my offering?' The trader finally gave his adopted sister a sari woven in gold. One day the adopted sister of the trader went to Indrapuri to clean Indra's



place. Indra, just emerging out of the palace of clouds, saw this woman adorned in a golden sari. 'Only Indrani wears such sari woven in gold! From where has then this woman acquired such a sari?' Indra posed the question to her. She said, 'Indra, your servant has given this to me. He has adopted me as his sister.' 'Fine,' said his majesty, Indra. He then went to hold his court.

His Majesty and his court were in session in Indrapuri. The courtiers were involved in an animated discussion. His Majesty Indra then addressed the court, 'Nobles, I command you thus! Who has adorned that woman servant in golden attire?' 'I, Sir am responsible for it', the trader's son replied. 'I have made you a great noble, and yet you have the cheek to work against my interests. Only Indrani, the queen, wears such clothes! Your services are no longer solicited. You are dismissed!' The traders' son was calm as he replied. 'All right, but I demand my salary for the years I've spent in your court and at your service.' 'Well, well', Indra thought. I must own him in lacs! Besides who has kept the accounts for those lacs anyway.' Indra said, 'My dear great noble, bring your bullock cart.' Indra then filled the bags with money after measuring, and handed them over to the trader's son. 'Here is your salary; you are now dismissed.'

These are only some of the questions that *Bharath* creates in the mind of the reader. I am sure that the text will soon become a favourite source for posing innumerable new questions in relation to the cultural history of India, the very category presently labeled as Adivasi and the historiography of Indian literature. That it will settle the question of the somewhat over-stressed and false generic distinction between Literature and Folklore is the safest guess that one can hazard. If these questions arise, and get discussed freshly in India in future, *Bharath* will have served its purpose. For providing the world the



narrative that has the potential of giving birth to those questions and cultural debates, and for rescuing the text from the very verge of extinction, we all owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Bhagwandas Patel, and to Dr. Nila Shah for translating it into English and making the great work available to the wider readership.

Ganesh Devy
Baroda
February 2012

Bhasha



Preface

This work is an outcome of my research, documentation and compilation of a living oral narrative tradition of the Dungri Bhils living in the Khedbrahma and Danta districts near the northern border between Rajasthan and Gujarat.

The saga of my journey among the hearths and hearts of the Dungri Bhils living amidst the hills and valleys of the Aravalli mountain ranges is full of exciting and revealing tales, a subject matter for an altogether different book. The first five months of this four year long journey ticked away in the search of competent singer-informants. Initially, I started with Devabhai Lalabhai Khant of Panthal village of Danta district in Gujarat. But he knew only a few *pankhdis* of the narrative. Later, I was introduced to Nathabhai Bhurabhai Gamar of Khedva village, a place seventeen kilometers from Khedbrahma. Being a nephew of the sage-singer, late Nanjibhai Lakhabhai Khant, he knew nearly the entire narrative. Eventually, between 1984 to 1987 all the episodes of *Bhilo nu Bharath* were recorded on four hundred audio cassettes.

Notably, the oral narratives of the Bhils are not meant for entertainment but are integral parts of their cultural and social rituals. The narrative is called *bhajan varta* and the chapters are called *pankhadi*, meaning petals. The Bhils perceive the narrative as a lotus flower that opens gradually and blooms with the recitation of each petal. Different pankhadis or episodes are sung while performing



social or religious rites and rituals. Documenting such a narrative involves not merely the act of documenting its verbal form but demands far more, as the researcher-compiler is expected to absorb and echo the emotions, psyche and cultural connotations of the performance.

During any celebration—social or religious—not only the kin of the concerned family but everyone from the neighbourhood assembles and participates in the performance. Besides the mood of the occasion itself, the enthusiasm and fervour of the gathering stimulates the lead singer. The lead singer sings in a living context before an audience that belongs, more often than not, to his own community. Before a large and receptive audience, he feels charged and inspired and the recalling of different episodes becomes more accurate and intense. The recitation of each episode affects the assembled group variedly, provoking specific emotions. For instance, during the celebration of *Bij*, a *marvula* of a particular pattern is made on a piece of cloth with white grains. Figures of the moon, the sun, the Pandavs, Lord Hanuman, Nisuki (serpent god), cow, and horse, among others, make a deep emotional and spiritual impact on the Bhils. The flickering light of the lamps, the sacred items and offerings and the frenzy created by the performance of the rite of initiating new disciples into the fold, kindle a kind of spiritual atmosphere. Whereas, on occasions as worshipping the *samadh*, the feast following the funeral rites, mourning and weeping of the kin of the deceased, engender a feeling of detachment and solemnity. During the performance of the *huro*, people become excited as this rite is performed only after the murder of one's kin is avenged. Under the spell of liquor, the Bhils let out a typical shriek called *kikiyari*, which creates an atmosphere of valour. Episodes of bravery and exploits as 'Karan, the Pandav', 'Dhofa and Vasang', 'Iko, the Danav Prince', 'Distribution of Land', 'Cloak of Fire', 'Mighty Bow and Arrow', 'The Skin of the Rhino' are narrated on this occasion. The lead singer aptly reads the minds of his audience and switches over from



one recitation to another, building and reinforcing the mood of his audience.

Remarkably, these longer narratives are seldom sung or performed at a stretch, from beginning to the end. Different episodes are sung and performed on corresponding social or religious occasions. Since these narratives are composed orally without the aid of any written medium, and are meant for oral presentation or performance on specific occasions, the sage-composer or the singer of such narratives must possess prodigious memory and an adaptable but highly traditional language reserve. In fact, any culture seeks and discovers its truth or essence in the particular order of meanings inherent in the structure of its language. Every language reflects the specificities of community, culture and religious practices of its user. A folk or oral epic, in particular, employs a language highly formulaic and sanctioned and developed over a long period of time by successive generations of poets, composers and singers. Some of the widely used expressions become stock expressions for battle scenes and stereotyped similes, describing the natural and other phenomenon in the course of the time.

Most episodes of *Bhilo nu Bharat* were recorded during their actual narration-performance. A few episodes, however, were documented later, at the leisure of the sage-singer. The recorded version was verified by another sage-singer, Vajabhai Kehrabhai Gamar of Nava Mota village. In addition, some details missed out in the oral narration, were discussed with several singers and added at a later stage.

Since such narratives have socio-religious implications, a researcher must be sensitive to the culture and traditions of the people. On occasions, lack of sensitivity or ignorance of the community traditions may prove to be disastrous. Once, on a cloudy evening, while discussing the episodes with him, I unwittingly requested Nathabhai if he could gift me his *tambur*. On hearing this, his eyes turned red and the corners of his lips started twitching. After a while



on regaining his composure, he said, ‘This tambur is my parent. My father and I used to sing together to the accompaniment of this tambur and our hearts would mingle into one. Then the Goddess of Learning would come and settle in our throats and the bhajans would start flowing incessantly. We could visualize Rom–Sitma, five Pandav brothers, Satiyo Chandan, King Harischandra, in person. Today, my father is no more but this tambur, a legacy of my father, keeps him alive in my memory. This tambur is my father. How can I give it to you?’ I realized that unknowingly I had made a grave mistake. I was not aware that not only the tambur or such other objects and musical instruments, but even narratives are like the soul of an entire generation.

With this revelation, I humbly acknowledge the invaluable contribution of Nathabhai Gamar, Parabhai Gamar, Late Velabhai Kodrvi, Devabhai Khant, and all the accompanists that have contributed in shaping the narrative into a single whole.

Bhagwandas Patel
Ahmedabad
1997

Translated from Gujarati by Nila Shah



The Tale Never Ends

There would hardly be any Indian language that does not have a narrative based on the tales or events of the *Mahabharat* and the *Ramayan*. When I came across *Bhilo nu Bharat*, in Dungri Bhili language, compiled and edited by Bhagandas Patel, I was not much surprised. However, the first peep into the text made me realize how significantly it differs in content and tone from its many existing counterparts, and yet adds greatly to our understanding of the same.

Close readings of the text transports the readers into an altogether different realm, the realm of myth and collective consciousness of a community. Contrary to our simplistic notions of the divine, formed naturally owing to our scientific culture, the world of ancients rarely regarded the divine entities as supernatural beings, dwelling in a separate, metaphysical ambit. For the ancients no ontological gap existed between the world of the mortals and of the divine. Perhaps, mythology for them was not about theology, rather it was closer to their everyday existence, a way to cope with the unexplained, inscrutable human quandary. Owing to this, oral tales carry us beyond history and enable us to have a closer look at the core of existential reality that remains beyond the reach and bound of our scientific world. Like many oral narratives of mythical nature, *Bhilo nu Bharat*, introduces the readers to a world where gods and goddesses behave as human beings, expressing human emotions as love, hatred, rage and other passions. One comes across a dead person conversing



with one's kin and water or land miraculously parting to let a chosen one escape his or her predicament; birds, animals and even dreams are personified and speak as human beings. Nevertheless, a *sahridaya*—a compassionate and sensitized reader—can certainly not discard these narratives as fabulous or incredible, or cast them aside as an inchoate or inferior body of literature. On the contrary, they link the readers with their pre-modern past.

As I entered into the enchanting world of the Dungri Bhils, I realized that I was not handling any ordinary text but a narrative deeply steeped in mythology. As my acquaintance with the Dungri Bhili people and their traditions and literature became more intimate, I felt that the gravitational pull of the varied and rich corpus of their oral literary tradition was inescapable. Bhils, like several Adivasi communities, are accustomed to transmitting their texts orally. The stylistic features latent in their narratives facilitate not only oral transmission of the texts but also their committing to memory. Rather than being a word-for-word practice, an oral narrative works with larger blocks of material, using thematic and a variety of traditionally derived patterning, to aid retention. In the Dungri Bhili context, an oral narrative, called a *bhajan varta*, is a loose, episodic structure. Each episode is called a *pankhadi*, a petal of a flower. The narrative is compared to a lotus flower that opens gradually. Consequently, the order of the episodes may be changed at times, in line with the central story. At other times, the lead singer may switch from one episode to another to match the mood of the audience. Even otherwise, the longer narratives of the Dungri Bhils are never narrated as a streamlined tale. Different episodes are sung on different occasions and episodes from several different narratives are sung on a particular occasion depending on their nature and significance in the particular context. These narratives are a combination of memorized and remembered text. The lead singer narrates the 'prose-verse' version of the tale as it comes to him, or as prompted by his accompanists or the audience. As many of the long narratives are recited during



religious rituals, and since the audience is familiar with the tale, the singer is not allowed to change the main story; however, while reciting or narrating the prose parts of the verse, he may add a few lines befitting the over all framework and ongoing episodes of the narrative. Nevertheless, the order of the episodes may change at times, which is permissible if this does not alter the central story. For instance, in the episode of ‘Sanetaro Yagna’ or Sankhodwar Yagn, Hodra is already introduced as a consort of Arjhan, whereas, in a later episode, Lord Krishna goes to the Pandav princes with a request to marry his sister.

Besides, as a lead singer acquires the tale from his guru, one may come across a variant of the same episode when narrated by two different singers. The lead singer, at times, tends to lapse while narrating and consequently, one may come across a few gaps or variations in the text. For instance, in the episode of the ‘Tower of Victory’, a section of the narrative is missing. However, after discussing this episode with his informers, Dr Bhagwandas Patel has provided the missing tale. Similarly, in the very first episode one comes across variations in the number of children killed by Satraja in the verse and the prose versions. Likewise, the episode of ‘Sanetaro Yagna’ may baffle the readers for its didacticism. However, this episode has other references marked with esoteric connotations. It should be remembered that these narratives are specific to certain traditions. In the context of these long narratives, the term ‘traditional’ is very significant, implying a depth of meaning set into that literature from its origin by previous generations. Viewed from this perspective, the text and context are inseparable. Without a sympathetic knowledge of the context, the text may be misunderstood. Besides, these narratives, though associated with religious and social rites and rituals, are disseminators of camouflaged message and knowledge systems. They are like books of life. The ethics and value systems of the Bhils are weaved in the very fabric of these tales, revealing their world view to empathetic listeners and readers. In spite of a few



deviations, the present text provides a fascinating and engrossing experience.

Regardless of the moments of gnashing of teeth and defeating impulses, I have greatly enjoyed reading and translating *Bhilo nu Bharath*. While translating this text, I had my moments of realisation as well. I came to understand that the possessors of such a rich and varied heritage of songs, stories and narratives can by no means be viewed as illiterate or backward. Surprisingly, in Gujarat, though we have been sharing the same geographic location and natural resources with the Dungri Bhils for centuries, it is exciting and invigorating to see the same space and world perceived and delineated differently.

Something is bound to evaporate while translating, as a literal translation in general and translation of a culturally embedded text in particular, does have its own limitations. Certain complex cultural phenomena inherently resist transfer in any other language, leaving the translator in the lurch. Besides, an oral narrative, when transferred into a written text, becomes static. One cannot ignore the fact that any oral narration owes its vivacity to many factors including active response of the audience, mental state of the narrator at the time of the narration, musical instruments, reverberating sounds of music, pauses and the atmosphere of the occasion itself. An act of translating such a performance or text makes it frozen, and for those who do not have access to the last vestige of the oral narratives, such frozen texts become their only resource. With this awareness, as a translator, I was required to prepare myself in many ways that involved a lot of de-learning or re-learning of literary habits. I have endeavoured to remain true to Bhili customs and to convey each mood as accurately as possible. Nevertheless, I carry no such illusion that I have done complete justice to the original. My inability to discern any prescribed pattern based on their prosody may have resulted into inadequacy in translation, and I earnestly believe that this should be justified at the hand of a more competent translator in future. With the extent of insight I could acquire about the Bhili language and



narratives, and without particular orientation in the discipline of translation, I have endeavoured to understand the original text with not only my eyes but also my ears, nose and other sensory faculties, for oral narratives are never meant only to be narrated.

Since I do not feel the need to clutter a book with hundreds of explanatory notes, I have tried to keep their numbers to the minimum, and with the consent of the editor, have taken some freedom with the translation on occasions, without changing the essential meaning of the narrative. However, to reduce textual obscurities, a glossary is provided at the end. And with an exception of the *phatanas*—the banter songs sung at the time of the weddings—I have endeavoured to translate the entire text with utmost care and closeness to retain authenticity and flavour of the original work. I hope that my translation will convey to the readers some of the beauty and vigour of the original.

This translation would not have been possible without constant guidance and spontaneous support of Dr. Bhagwandas Patel, the editor-compiler of the text and to Prof. Ganesh Devy who suggested that I undertake the translation of Dr. Patel's epics. I am immensely grateful to Prof. Devy for instigating me to approach this rich corpus of oral literature more intimately through translation. I am greatly thankful to Prof. Shereen Ratnagar for her culturally sensitive reading of the translation and valuable editorial suggestions. I thank M. R. Adwanikar for going through the final proofs and to Sonal Baxi and Niraj Kenge for the production of this book. I thank the Central Institute of Indian Languages for their support to the publication. Finally, I thank my son Siddharth for his skepticism regarding my competence as a translator, which made me strive harder than ever to do my best.

Nilā Shah
Rajkot
February 2012





BHARATH

Bhasha



GANGA AND SATRAJA

Once upon a time, a frog embarked on a pilgrimage to the river Ganga. He came across a big city on his way. While he was strolling around in the marketplace, a herd of cows happened to come that way. The frog tried to leap clear of the way but he could not do so. He was trampled under the feet of a cow. He died and his soul soared around in the marketplace. At that moment a childless Bania and his wife were passing by. The soul of the frog entered the womb of the Bania's wife and after nine months and nine days a baby boy was born to her.

The boy grew up into a bright young man. He pondered, 'What shall I get by staying at home? I must find a way of earning a livelihood. But where should I seek that? I'll certainly not work for an ordinary person. Why can't I have Indar¹ as a master? He is greatest of the great.' Thinking thus he set off for Indrapuri. He went straight to Indar's court. Indar said, 'Why have you come to my court?' 'I have come, O sire, in search of work,' replied the youth. 'And from which community do you hail?' asked Indar. 'I am the son of a Bania, O master,' said the young man. Indar employed the young Bania and sought to instil wisdom in him.

One fine day there occurred an incident that turned out to be very auspicious. The Bania's son was sitting outside his house, cleaning his teeth with a *datan*. He beheld a sweeper woman busy





with her chores. He mused, 'I shall consider her my solemnly adopted sister, but then what should I give her as a gift?' He pondered for a while and decided to give her clothes of gold.

The next day when the sweeper woman, clad in the golden attire, was cleaning the marketplace, Indar emerged from his cloud-capped palace. He saw the sweeper woman in golden attire. He pondered for a while, 'Only Indrani wears apparel made of pure gold. From where must this sweeper woman have got such clothes?' He stopped the woman in gold and asked, 'From where did you get this golden attire?' The sweeper woman replied, 'Your servant gifted them to me. He has adopted me as his sister.' 'Is that so?' asked Indar, turning back for his court.

On reaching his court, Indar said, 'O courtiers, listen to what I say. Who has got that sweeper woman clad in gold?' The young Bania rose and said, 'I did, O king, I've adopted her as my sister.' 'I promoted you to the rank of a nobleman and you have the audacity to go against my interests? Aren't you aware that only Indrani, the queen, wears such clothes? You shall no more be in my attendance. You may go your way.' 'Well, if you wish so, my Lord and Master, I'll leave,' said the unperturbed Bania youth, 'But I should be paid for the services rendered to you, sir.' Indar pondered for a while, 'I owe him a lot as I've never paid him in cash or kind.' He said aloud, 'You, willful Bania boy! Go and bring your bullocks and a cart.' The Bania youth yoked his bullocks and arrived at Indar's court. Indar was weighing coins on a scale. He filled several sacks with them. 'Collect your dues and get out of my sight,' he said to the bania boy. The Bania's son loaded his cart and set out for the journey home.

On his way the Bania's son pondered for a while, 'What shall I do with this cartload of wealth? I should spend half the amount on pilgrimage. I'll go to the banks of Ganga for a blessing.' He changed course and took the way to the Ganga. On he pressed and reached a dense forest. In the forest one of his bullocks died. The Bania's son was stranded in the darkness. Disappointed, he pleaded to the Sun,





‘O great God, omnipotent, come to my succour. Without your help I’ll perish in this wilderness. O Lord, my bullock has died. Take pity on my wretched self and get me out of this calamity.’ The Sun heard his pleas and appeared before him, ‘Why did you beseech me so ardently, young man?’ ‘I am on my way to pilgrimage to the river Ganga. However, one of my oxen has died. I am stuck here. Distressed and distraught I entreat you, O great sire,’ said the Bania boy. ‘I’ll help you for sure if you agree to what I say,’ said the deity. ‘You have my word, O Lord,’ said the distressed youth. ‘Swear that you’ll part with half of your cartload if I revive your ox.’ The Bania’s son nodded his head in affirmation and the ox came back to life.

The youth resumed his journey. He reached the banks of the Ganga. He bathed in it ritually. Then he emptied the load out of the cart and cast it off in the flowing water. He then turned his cart around on an unknown path. Soon he was confronted by the Sun God, ‘Well, my son, what about my share of your wealth?’ ‘I committed a mistake, O Lord, I offered my share as well as yours to the river.’ ‘You sly fox!’ said the God, ‘You should have at least retained my share.’ As he spoke these words, the youth turned into a fox. His oxen turned into a sambhar and a wild boar.

One day another incident occurred which turned out to be auspicious. The youth-turned-fox went to the river to slake his thirst. As he was drinking water, Ganga, in the form of a woman, emerged from *paatal* to bathe in the water. Her radiant limbs were brighter than sun beams. Her skin was the hue of fire. ‘Oh! She is Ganga,’ whispered the fox. And hiding behind a clump of river-reeds, he watched her. After a while he called, ‘Ganga, O Ganga!’ ‘Who calls?’ she asked. ‘I am a fox. Will you be my wife?’ said the fox. ‘Just a miserable fox and he thinks that I’ll be his wife!’ jeered she and took another dip in the water. The fox persisted and Ganga lost her temper. She picked up a stone and threw it at the gibbering fox. It hit him in the eye. The fox cried out, ‘Now, you’ll have to pay a price. You could have simply refused my proposal, why did you hurt my eye?’





I won't spare you now.' A frightened Ganga turned on her heels and ran towards the Meru-Sumeru mountain. Sansankhar, her guru, resided there. Ganga raced to his *dhuni* and hid behind him. 'What has brought you here like this, my child?' asked her guru.

'I was bathing in the river, O guru, and a fox watched me thus from behind weeds. He asked me to marry him and when I refused, he persisted. I lost my patience and hurled a stone to get rid of him. But the stone hit his eye and he now asks for the price for his eye. He is pursuing me, so I have run to the safety of your *dhuni*.' Saying thus, she sat hiding behind her guru and started to string pearls and diamonds for him. She had hardly been there for a few moments when she heard the fox, who had followed her trail, say, 'I know, Ganga, you are hiding at the *dhuni*. I'm not going to let you off.' 'Who is shouting so?' asked the guru. 'It's him, the fox. He has reached here,' said Ganga. 'Ganga, now you can't give me the slip,' the fox shouted again. The guru said, 'Take this *bhasma kankan*, and point it towards the fox.' Ganga raised the *bhasma kankan* and the fox turned into a heap of ash. 'O, he has turned into ash!' exclaimed Ganga. 'Now, tie his ashes into a knot at the end of your *chundadi* and immerse it in the river Ganga to liberate his soul,' said the guru.

As Ganga tied the ash into a knot and put it afloat, the ash spoke, 'You have performed my final rite. You are now my wife.' Ganga did not pay any heed and returned to her abode in the netherworld. The ash grew into a sal tree. A branch of the tree bent over the flowing water. The tree spoke, 'O Ganga, you are my wife indeed. Look, how you wash my limbs day and night.' Ganga pondered for a while, 'How can I get rid of this pestering tree?' She went into spate and swelled over the banks. The sal was uprooted. It drifted along with the current.

The tree trunk called aloud, 'O Ganga, you are my wife no doubt, that's why I float in your water. See, how I nestle amongst your waves!' Water rose still higher and the trunk was thrown on to the riverbank. The tree trunk lay decaying by the riverside for twelve years.





One day, Ganga's guru came down the Meru-Sumeru mountain for a bath in the Ganga. He stood by the decaying trunk of the sal tree. He touched the trunk with his tongs and said, 'I invoke you, O Lord of Fire, come and animate the trunk with life.' The Fire God arrived and poured breath into the trunk of the sal tree. A youth called Satraja² emerged from the decaying tree.

The guru said, 'Speak, O Satraja, what do you want?' Satraja replied, 'O guru, take me to your dhuni, if you please.' Sansankhar, the guru, led him to his dhuni. Once there, Satraja made a huge bow and many arrows. He hunted doves and partridges in great numbers and consigned the dead birds to the sacred fire of the dhuni. The guru tried to stop him, 'This is a heinous sin. Why do you do so deliberately?'

'I'll commit a sin of the worst kind, unless you give me word to grant me a wish,' said the youth. 'You have my word in the name of truth. I'd die rather than go back on my word,' said the holy man. 'O guru, you are bound by your word, aren't you?' said Satraja. 'Yes, I am,' replied the guru. 'Then let me marry your disciple, Ganga.' The guru pondered for a while. Then he said, 'Ask for something else.' 'I don't have any other desire,' said Satraja. The perturbed holy man mused for some time. 'You sly man, you cheated me into this, but now I am helpless,' saying this, he summoned Ganga from paataal. Ganga circumambulated her guru and touched his feet. 'O Ganga, give me your word that you'll comply with what I say.' 'You have my word, O guru, I'd rather die than disobey you,' said she. 'I too stand pledged to someone. Ganga, Satraja wants to marry you,' said her guru. Ganga replied, 'You should not have forced me into such a dire strait. But since you are my guru, I will be true to my pledge to you. I'll marry him but on one condition.' The guru said, 'Satraja, now it is your turn to give her a promise.' 'Anything, anything at all. I promise to do anything she asks for, if she agrees to marry me,' said Satraja.

Ganga said, 'After our union all our new born children should





be taken to the river to be immersed in its water. The children of Ganga, the woman, should be drowned in the river Ganga. And you'll do this with your own hands,' said Ganga. Satraja promised and Ganga married him.

Ganga and Satraja then settled at a place called Dudhiya Deval. They lived a happy, blissful life. Four children were born to them, Gagiver³ first, followed by Setar⁴ and Visetar⁵. Soon after their births Satraja killed them with his hands and consigned their bodies to the Ganga. Then a baby girl was born. The pledge-bound king took the baby girl in his arms and started for the river bank. The people of his town said, 'O king, you are true to your word, no doubt. But if you kill every child of yours, who will look after you in your old age?' The king pondered, 'Perhaps what they say is true. And how can I kill such a beautiful baby?' He entrusted the girl to some neighbours and relatives.⁶ On his return, Ganga said, 'Tell me the truth, have you killed the baby?' 'Yes, of course. I killed her with my own hands,' said the king. Ganga clapped thrice. With each clap, a child materialized from thin air. 'Where is our princess? Had you drowned her in the water, she would have appeared before us. You lied to me, O king. Our bond ends here and now,' said Ganga. 'Forgive me Ganga, I can't live without you,' said the king. 'I am aware of that, O king, but I no longer belong to you. Nevertheless, I'll give you my armlet. I will be born again in the palace of a king called Rangraja. Come there with this armlet. In my next birth, I'll be yours once again,' said Ganga. As soon as she finished, she began to melt in the air. The king tried to stop her but he could only manage to grab a lock of her hair. Ganga turned into a fish.

Indar was assigned the task of guarding the waters of the seven seas. He watched over the water for twelve long years. Indrani, the consort of Indar, waited for him. One fine day she wrote a letter to him. She then opened the door of her parrot's cage and took it out. She tied the letter to the parrot's neck and said, 'Fly, O parrot, to my Indar. Fly over the seven seas and find my king.' Flying over the





stretch of water, the parrot reached Indar. Indar saw him come and exclaimed, 'This is Indrani's parrot.' He untied the letter from around the bird's neck. His beloved queen's endearing words excited Indar. In the moment of arousal his vital organ came off. Indar picked it up and wrapped it in the letter. He then tied the letter around the parrot's neck and asked it to fly back to its mistress.

On his way home, the parrot felt thirsty and flew down to drink water from the sea. As he bent over the water, Indar's organ slipped out of the letter. Ganga, who had turned into a fish, saw something fall. She swam across and swallowed it. The parrot pondered for a while, 'What shall I say to Indrani?' The parrot then reached Indrapuri. Indrani enquired about Indar. The parrot said, 'My master had tied something to my neck but when I swooped down to drink water, it fell into the deep.' Indrani was disappointed.

When a fisherman cast his net in the ocean, Ganga, in the form of the fish, was caught in it. The fisherman pulled her out. Ganga spoke to him, 'I won't blame you for catching me, O fisherman, but please don't decide my price. I'll fix my price. Tell the willing buyer that the fish will name its own price.'

The fisherman went to the market to sell the fish. People asked him whether the fish was for sale. The fisherman nodded his head in affirmation. But when the people asked the price, he said, 'The fish will name its price.' Bewildered, people stared at him and laughed, 'He is out of his wits, indeed! Can a dead fish speak? Why don't you tell the price?' 'I won't tell you the price. The fish will decide it on its own,' said the fisherman. No one could believe him. The people dispersed after a while. Rangraja, the ruler of the town, heard about the crazy fisherman. He pondered, 'This is amazing. Let's see if a dead fish can really name its price.' He sent for the fisherman. He bought the fish at the price named by it. After the fisherman left, the fish said, 'Please don't cook me today. Keep me aside and slice me only after nine months and nine days.' The king ordered the fish to be placed in a safe place.





After nine months and nine days, the king remembered what the fish had said. He sliced it open. As he pierced the belly of the fish, a baby girl emerged from it. The king adopted the girl. By day and night, she started to grow.

On the other hand, Satraja, the king, became morose and moody. He was seriously ill. Anxiety fed on his soul. He could neither get well nor die. He kept muttering, 'a virgin girl'. His eldest son asked him, 'What ails you so, O father? You seem to be agitated. Owing to some unfulfilled desire, your soul refuses to depart your body.' The king said, 'I want to leave this world but unless I marry a virgin, my soul won't leave my mortal frame. Do me a favour, son. Here is an armlet of pure gold. Take it to Rangraja. Request him for the hand of his daughter.' The three sons of Satraja went to the kingdom of Rangraja. They said to the king, 'Our father is mortally ill but he can't die unless he marries a virgin. We have come here to request for the hand of your daughter in marriage. Our father has sent you this golden armlet.' The king said, 'I have a girl of marriagable age but she is not my true daughter.' The king called the princess. When she saw the armlet, she said, 'Satraja awaits me. He is sick as he wants to marry me. Do not delay. I should marry him at the earliest.' The king said, 'But he is convulsed in the throes of death.' 'It's all written in one's destiny, father. Arrange for my nuptials without delay.' Rangraja gave a coconut to the sons of Satraja. The princess was engaged to marry a dying man. The sons returned to their father with the coconut. They carried their father back in a palanquin to the kingdom of king Rangraja. Satraja and his bride were tied in wedding knot. While going around the sacred fire, Satraja said to his sons, 'Now, I'll die in peace. Cremate me on an expanse of virgin land.' Satraja's sons set out with his body in search of a virgin land. They went from place to place but could not find a virgin piece of land. They met Kasma Avtar⁷, the Lord of the Universe, on their way and said, 'We want to cremate our father's body. We are looking for a piece of virgin land.' Kasma Avtar said, 'A swan has just laid eggs





in a place called Ratan lake. Her nest lies on virgin land.' The brothers went to the lake. They said to the swan, 'Kindly step out of your nest with your three little ones. Your nest lies upon virgin land. We want to cremate our father here.' The bird said, 'After the cremation, will you go away or claim this land?' 'Of course we'll go away,' said the princes. The swan came out of her nest. Satraja was cremated on the piece of virgin land. The princes established a city called Asanapari⁸ on that spot. They built palaces as high as the clouds.

After performing the final rite of their father, the brothers returned to Rangraja's kingdom. They said to the king, 'We got our father married to your daughter but he has passed away. We'll return to our land. We won't take your daughter with us as she might feel miserable at our place.' Rangraja said, 'The wedding was duly solemnised. My daughter has married your father. She is your step-mother now. You can't leave her behind. It is your duty to look after her,' said Rangraja.

The three sons of Satraja returned to their kingdom with their step-mother. They pondered for a while, 'Who will look after our mother?' 'You are the eldest brother,' the other two sons said to Gagiver, 'It is your duty to take care of her.' Gagiver agreed. 'I'll take good care of her,' said Gagiver. He stayed indoors to serve her. Setar and Visetar pondered, 'Gagiver does not come out of mother's palace. Day and night he remains in her company.'

They suspected their brother's fidelity. So they hid behind a window to observe what was happening inside. They peeped in and found their mother lying fast asleep on the high couch and Gagiver seated by her. One of her feet had slipped off the couch in sleep. Gagiver pondered for a while, 'Her foot will ache if it remains hanging so all night. But if I touch her to place it back, I will be committing a sin. However, her sleep should not be disturbed.' Gagiver picked up his dhoti and rolled it into an *indhoni*. He placed the indhoni on his head and slid it beneath his mother's dangling leg to give it support. After a while, his mother woke up. She was





startled to see Gagiver in that position. ‘You must be tired sitting like this, son,’ said she. ‘Not at all, mother, I thought your leg would ache if it remained hanging,’ replied the devoted son, ‘And if I touched it to put it back, I would have committed a sin. So I rolled my dhoti into an indhoni and placed my head beneath your leg.’ ‘You are the most dutiful son in this world,’ said his mother. Setar and Visetar watched everything hiding under the window. ‘We have committed a sin,’ thought they, ‘We doubted our brother’s intention. We should do some penance.’ They consulted a few wise people. ‘Ask Gagiver, he has answers to such questions,’ said the wise men. The brothers went to Gagiver and said, ‘What is the remedy to absolve a person from the grave sin of suspecting an innocent person, O brother?’ Gagiver, without caring to know who had committed the sin, replied, ‘That is a grave sin. At the confluence of twelve rivers lies a paras pipal tree. A white cow sits beneath it and a shrine of Shiv is located nearby. After doing due penance there, one needs to slit the trunk of the tree and get burnt alive by sitting inside its hollow. Then alone will one be absolved.’

The brothers set out for the place. They journeyed from one place to another. Walking through the forest they reached a place called Koteswar and took it to be the place described by Gagiver. But they could not find all the signs and so resumed their journey. After walking for quite some time they reached a place called Dan Mahudi. After enjoying a smoke of hemp they continued on their way. At last they arrived at a place called Chanchad Delwada near Gun Bhankhadi. There at the confluence of twelve rivers, they found a white cow sitting under the tree of a paras pipal. Setar and Visetar sat down to meditate. They meditated so avidly that since that day, the shrine of Shiv is known as God Chitra-Vichitra’s shrine. After a deep trance the princes carved a niche in the trunk of the tree and sat inside it, waiting for someone to ignite a fire for them. Solanki, from the village of Vinchhi, passed by. They requested him to light a fire but he refused, ‘You do not seem to be true ascetics. I won’t





oblige imposters.’ Matro Pargi of Matarwala village arrived at the shrine after some time. The princes said, ‘Set the tree on fire for our sake, O wayfarer.’ Matro lit a fire and the brothers immolated themselves.

One fine day an incident occurred which turned out to be very auspicious. The queens of Setar and Visetar asked their mother-in-law, ‘Our husbands have immolated themselves and we are alone in this world, without offsprings. What shall be our plight?’ ‘Follow my instructions, my daughters, listen to me carefully,’ said the queen, ‘At the first flush of the Sun on the horizon, appear before Gagiver wearing not a stitch on you. You’ll be blessed with offsprings.’

The next day when the first rays of the Sun streaked the sky, the nude princesses walked up to Gagiver. But one of the princesses covered her eyes with her hands and so a blind son was born to her. The other princess covered her shame while walking past Gagiver. A son, frail and lacking in vitality, was born to her. The blind prince was named Andh Raja⁹ and the anaemic one was called Pandu. Andh Raja was announced the sovereign of Dhavlo Gadh and Pandu was declared ruler of Asanapari. Gagiver had a *samadhi* built in the memory of his father and a red *dhaja* was driven onto it. Once, a hovering kite fancied it to be a piece of flesh and scooped down to grab it. She was pierced by the tip of the flagstaff. Blood dripped on the ground. Gagiver collected the drops and created a girl. He named her Gatarpa.¹⁰ He then shaped another girl from the flesh of the kite and called her Kutma.¹¹ When the girls grew into womanhood they were wedded to Andh Raja and Pandu respectively.

It’s a tale of righteous people ...*ra*¹²

It’s a tale of righteous people.

Let’s hear the tale of upright and virtuous people ...*raji*¹³...

Almighty God blessed Satraja and his bride.





He blessed Satraja and his bride.

‘Eat, drink and prosper in your life,’ said he.

Satraja ruled over the kingdom of Dudhiya Deval.

He ruled over the kingdom of Dudhiya Deval.

Along with Ganga, he ruled over Dudhiya Deval.

They ambled around the mango grove.

They ambled around the mango grove.

They roamed about the glistening green garden.

Together they played a game of dice.

Together they played a game of dice.

Sitting on a mattress of silk, they played dice.

The king and his bride,

The king and his bride,

They enjoyed the bliss of nuptial life.

On one auspicious day,

On one auspicious day,

The Sun shone brightly over the world.

One fine day an incident took place.

One fine day an incident took place.

Which turned out to be very auspicious.

Ganga pondered for a while.

She pondered for a while.

She was absorbed in deep thoughts.

The queen was in her menstrual period.

She was in her menstrual period.

Ganga pondered for a while.





The waking cock's crowing heralded the day.
The waking cock's crowing heralded the day.
The first streak of Sun brightened the sky.

Ganga adorned herself in many fine ways.
She adorned herself in many fine ways.
She summoned her maids.

'Why did you call us at this early hour, O queen?'
'Why did you call us at this early hour?'
'For what urgent matter have you summoned us?' said they.

'Listen carefully to what I say,' said Ganga.
'Listen carefully to what I say.
There is no time for delay.'

'Before the morning Sun rises, O maids,
Before the morning Sun rises,
Take a pair of new clothes and follow me.'

The maids hurried off to carry out her order.
They hurried off to carry out her order.
Ganga slipped on her silken footwear.

Hurriedly, they descended from the palace of clouds.
Hurriedly, they descended from the palace of clouds.
With long strides and short steps, they tore up the path.

Walking through the lanes and alleyways,
Walking through the lanes and alleyways,
They arrived at Ratnagar, the ocean.

Ganga removed her adornments.
She removed her adornments.





She took off the necklace and her upper garment.

Ganga let her hair fall loose.

She let her hair fall loose.

The maids rubbed saffron oil in Ganga's hair.

The queen stepped into the ocean waters.

She stepped into the ocean waters.

She played a game of *sirkaliya* with her maids.

After some time they came ashore.

After some time they came ashore.

Ganga clad herself in fine garments.

Ganga adorned herself in many ways.

She adorned herself in many ways.

She embellished herself in many ways.

The queen returned to her palace of clouds.

She returned to her palace of clouds.

She heated water in a copper vessel.

The queen helped the king with his bath.

She helped the king with his bath.

The king adorned himself in a groom's fineries.

Ganga prepared thirty-two kinds of delicacies.

She prepared thirty-two kinds of delicacies.

She cooked savoury dishes for the king.

Ganga, the queen, said to the king,

Ganga, the queen, said to the king,

'Listen to what I say.'





'Let's visit our mango grove.
Let's visit our mango grove.
Let us go for a stroll.'

They wore golden footwear.
They wore golden footwear.
Hastily, they descended from the cloud-capped palace.

They left behind their cloud-capped palace.
They left behind their cloud-capped palace.
Hurriedly, they tore along their way.

They arrived in the glistening green garden.
They arrived in the glistening green garden.
They ambled around in their lush green garden.

The king and his queen,
The king and his queen,
They wandered in their garden.

The queen expressed her innermost feelings.
She expressed her innermost feelings.
She disclosed her heart's desire to the king.

They rested beneath a champa tree.
They rested beneath a champa tree.
The king and his queen sat under a shady tree.

As the Sun descended behind the western hills,
As the Sun descended behind the western hills,
And the parakeets flew back to their nests,

The king said to Ganga,
He said to Ganga,





‘Listen to what I say.’

‘It’s time to return home.

It’s time to return home.

Let us go back to our cloud-capped palace.’

The queen walked with halting steps.

She walked with halting steps.

A child was growing within her.

Slowly they ascended the steps of the cloud-capped palace.

Slowly they ascended the steps of the cloud-capped palace.

The maids made a bed for their queen.

The maids spread a silk mattress on her couch.

They spread a silk mattress on her couch.

The queen reclined on her high couch.

The maids gently fanned her with hand fans.

They gently fanned her with hand fans.

On a high couch Ganga rested.

Days rolled into months.

Days rolled into months.

Ganga’s belly swelled with child.

At the end of nine months and nine days,

At the end of nine months and nine days,

The queen was in labour.

As the Sun appeared on the eastern horizon,

As the Sun appeared on the eastern horizon,

The queen summoned her maids.

Fifteen in place of one came to her attendance.





Fifteen in place of one came to her attendance.

'Make haste, call a midwife, O maids,' said the queen.

The maids raced down the stairs of the cloud-capped palace.

They raced down the stairs of the cloud-capped palace.

'O midwife, are you asleep or awake?' cried they.

'If you are asleep, it's time to wake!

If asleep, it's time to wake!

If you're up then open the gate!'

A startled midwife sprang to her feet.

A startled midwife sprang to her feet.

'Who's calling me at this hour?' asked she.

'Make haste, there's no time to delay, O midwife,

Make haste, there's no time to delay.

Our queen is having labour pangs.'

Holding tight her walking stick,

Holding tight her walking stick,

The midwife went with hasty steps.

'Bring some oil in a bowl,' said the midwife.

'Bring some oil in a bowl.

Help your queen onto an old mattress.'

'Make haste, there is no time for delay,' said she.

'Make haste, there is no time for delay.'

The midwife thus busied herself.

A son was born to Ganga, the queen.

A son was born to Ganga, the queen.

Her first child came in the world.





Ganga left the child unattended.
She left the child unattended.
She called the king to her palace.

‘It’s time to perform your duty, O king!
It’s time to perform your duty.
Stick to your promise,’ said she.

The king swaddled his first born in a piece of cloth.
He swaddled his firstborn in a piece of cloth.
Satraja lifted the child with care.

He descended the stairs of his palace.
He descended the stairs of his palace.
He went down the cloud-capped palace.

With long strides and short steps,
With long strides and short steps,
The king arrived in the marketplace.

Leaving behind Asanapari,
Leaving behind Asanapari,
The king arrived at Dhavlo Gadh.

At the outskirts of Dhavlo Gadh,
At the outskirts of Dhavlo Gadh,
The king stopped to ponder.

The king paused to look at his son.
He paused to look at his son.
The child was happily sucking his thumb.

The king pondered for a while.
He pondered for a while.





He stared at the face of his child.

The child was as beautiful as the full moon.

He was as beautiful as the full moon.

His face was radiant like the full moon.

He had a pointed shapely nose.

He had a pointed shapely nose.

He was endowed with sharp features.

The child stared back with his dark black eyes.

The child stared back with his dark back eyes.

‘How can one kill one’s own child?’ thought the king.

‘Killing a child is a heinous sin.

Killing a child is a heinous sin.

I cannot do such a terrible thing.’

The king hardened his heart.

He hardened his heart.

He dashed the child’s head against a stone.

The king pondered for a while.

He pondered for a while.

He was hesitant to kill his child.

‘I’ve killed four sons.¹⁴

I have killed four sons.

How can I kill a baby girl?’

The king gazed at his daughter’s face.

He gazed at his daughter’s face.

He mused over her fate.

‘The queen is in the palace of clouds,’ thought he.





‘The queen is in the palace of clouds.
Killing a girl-child is immoral.’

With long strides and short steps,
With long strides and short steps,
He tore up the way to the place of Gargar, the ascetic.

The ascetic saw the king coming.
He saw the king coming.
He went forward to receive him with warmth.

Affectionately, Gargar greeted the king.
Affectionately, he greeted the king.
He made him sit on a small quilt.

The king opened his heart to the ascetic.
He opened his heart to the ascetic.
Relieved of his burden, the king left for his palace.

With long strides and short steps,
With long strides and short steps,
The king tore up his way.

Hurriedly, he ascended the stairs of his palace.
Hurriedly, he ascended the stairs of his palace.
He climbed onto his cloud-capped palace.

Hurriedly, he returned to his palace.
Hurriedly, he returned to his palace.
He climbed onto his palace of clouds.

The queen pondered for a while.
She pondered for a while.
‘The king has deceived me indeed.’





Ganga spoke to the king.
She spoke to the king.
'Listen to what I say.'

'I am going for a bath.
I am going for a bath.
I'm going to the sea for a dip.'

Ganga went to the Ratnagar ocean,
She went to the Ratnagar ocean.
She stood at the shore of the ocean.

Ganga bowed to the ocean.
She bowed to the ocean.
She was determined to find the truth.

Ganga prepared beds of *jowar*.
She prepared beds of *jowar*.
She sowed some seeds in the soil.

Standing on one leg,
Standing on one leg,
Ganga prayed to God.

'Be by my side, O God.
Be by my side.
Help me to find the truth.'

'My king has made mistakes, O God!
My king has made mistakes.
Help me to verify the truth, God!'

Ganga picked the *jowar* sprouts.
She picked the *jowar* sprouts.





Some of the sprouts had dried.

Ganga was dismayed.

She was dismayed.

She was convinced about the king's deceit.

Ganga returned to her palace.

She returned to her palace.

After verifying the truth she came back.

The queen heated water in a copper vessel.

She heated water in a copper vessel.

She helped the king to have his bath.

The queen laid a high couch for the king.

She laid a high couch for the king.

She asked her maids to fetch some perfumed oil.

The maids brought perfume of musk.

They brought perfume of musk.

The queen rubbed the oil in her hair.

The queen applied fragrant oil to her feet.

She applied fragrant oil to her feet.

She adorned herself in various ways.

The queen prepared five kinds of delicacies.

She prepared five kinds of delicacies.

She laid them in golden platters for the king.

The queen handed the king a pitcher of water.

She handed the king a pitcher of water.

She asked him to have his meal.

The king washed his hands.





He washed his hands.

He sat down to have his meal.

While the king relished his meal,

While the king relished his meal,

The queen spoke to him.

‘Tell me the truth, O king.

Tell me the truth.

Hiding the truth will invite calamity.’

‘Have you broken your promise, O king?

Have you broken your promise?

How many of our children did you kill?’

‘I killed them by smashing their skulls.

I killed them by smashing their skulls.

I’ve killed them all, O queen,’ said the king.

The queen shivered on hearing such a lie.

She shivered on hearing such a lie.

‘You have gone back on your pledge,’ said she.

‘I’ve killed four children, O queen,’ said the king.

I’ve killed four children.

I’ve been true to my word.’

‘Listen to what I say, O king,’ said Ganga.

‘Listen to what I say.

Eat, drink and prosper with your sons.’

‘I’m no more obliged to be with you.

I’m no more obliged to be with you.

You’ve been false to me.’





Ganga melted away in the thin air.
She melted away in the thin air.
She disappeared in the blink of an eye.

The king tried to grab her hand.
He tried to grab her hand.
He managed to merely snatch her hair.

Five strands of Ganga's hair,
Five strands of Ganga's hair,
Only a lock of her hair remained with the king.

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GATARPA AND KUTMA

Seven rishis were meditating.
Seven rishis were meditating.
Amidst the forest, seven rishis were meditating.

Sav Sakti¹⁵ pondered for a while.
She pondered for a while.
She mused for some time.

Sav Sakti took the form of a kite.
She took the form of a kite.
She soared upon the heavenly wind.

Sav Sakti slid down the heavenly wind.
She slid down the heavenly wind.
She soared over four continents.

The rishis had vowed to meditate for twelve years.
The rishis had vowed to meditate for twelve years.
They sat meditating at their dhuni.

Sav Sakti came to distract them.
She came to distract them.
She decided to divert the attention of the rishis.





The kite sat atop the trident of the rishis.
She sat atop the trident of the rishis.
She sat on the tip of the trident.

The kite was pierced as she sat upon the trident.
She was pierced as she sat upon the trident.
Her body was cut into two halves.

She died in the dhuni of the ascetics.
She died in the dhuni of the ascetics.
Her body dangled from the trident for twelve long years.

As the twelfth year came to a close,
As the twelfth year came to a close,
The sages opened their eyes.

'Ill has been done in the world,' they said.
Ill has been done in the world.
A kite has died in our dhuni.'

'We must have committed some sin in the past.
We must have committed a sin in the past.
A kite has died while we were meditating.'

The sages brought a jar filled with nectar.
They brought a jar filled with nectar.
A jar filled with nectar was brought by the sages.

The sages cut a twig of kaniyor tree.
They cut a twig of kaniyor tree.
The sages dipped the twig in nectar.

The sages touched the kite with the twig.
They touched the kite with the twig.





Two maidens emerged from it.

The maidens grew by day and night.

They grew by day and night.

They turned into damsels, pretty and fair.

The elder one was named Gatarpa.

The elder one was named Gatarpa.

The younger one was called Kutma.

One fine day when the Sun was shining brightly,

One fine day when the Sun was shining brightly,

Kutma placed an indhoni made of marva stalks on her head.

Kutma took a pitcher brought from Kashi.

She took a pitcher brought from Kashi.

She placed the pitcher on the indhoni.

Taking along a rope of silk,

Taking along a rope of silk,

She set off to fetch water.

Kutma took the way to Khanda lake.

She took the way to Khanda lake.

She put down her pitcher by the lake.

Kutma cut a thin twig of kaniyor tree.

She cut a thin stick of kaniyor tree.

Kutma cleaned her teeth with the twig.

Kutma took off her adornments.

She took off her adornments.

She wrapped herself in a fine piece of square cloth.

Kutma entered the lake for a dip.





She entered the lake for a dip.
She stepped in the lake to have a bath.

As Kutma emerged from the water,
As she emerged from the water,
The rising Sun was besotted by her beauty.

The slanting rays penetrated deep into her womb.
The slanting rays penetrated deep into her womb.
The rays impregnated Kutma.

The rays impregnated Kutma.
The rays impregnated Kutma.
Kutma was now with child.

Kutma's belly swelled with child.
Her belly swelled with child.
The child grew in the twinkle of an eye.

The child pushed its way out through Kutma's forehead.
It pushed its way out through her forehead.
Kutma's son came into this world through her forehead.

Kutma tore her chundadi in two.
She tore her chundadi in two.
She wrapped her son in one half of the chundadi.

Kutma raised her son to her bosom and sighed.
She raised her son to her bosom and sighed.
'You should not have been born to a virgin, O child!'

'It will be a spot on my guru's name,' said she.
It will be a spot on my guru.
My guru's name will be tarnished.





Kutma walked towards the city of Asanapari.
She walked towards the city of Asanapari.
She walked along, clasping her son to her bosom.

Kutma wandered in the lanes and alleyways of Asanapari.
She wandered in the lanes and alleyways of Asanapari.
She walked around the city of Asanapari.

With short steps and long strides,
With short steps and long strides,
She walked through the city of Asanapari.

Kutma headed for Gokul Gadh.
She headed for Gokul Gadh.
Hastily, she walked towards the outskirts of Gokul Gadh.

Kutma paused to have a look at her son.
She paused to have a look at her son.
The child was happily sucking his thumb.

Kutma pondered for a while.
She pondered for a while.
She stared at the face of her child.

Her son was as beautiful as a full moon.
He was as beautiful as a full moon.
His face radiated like a full moon.

He had a pointed shapely nose.
He had a pointed shapely nose.
He was endowed with sharp features.

The child stared back with his dark black eyes.
The child stared back with his dark back eyes.





‘How can one kill one’s own child?’ thought she.

‘Killing a child is a heinous sin.

Killing a child is a heinous sin.

I cannot do such a terrible thing.’

Kutma placed her son down on the ground.

She placed her son down on the ground.

She started digging the soft soil of a dunghill.

Kutma dug a pit with her hand.

She dug a pit with her hand.

She dug a pit in the dunghill.

Kutma dug a pit for her child.

She dug a pit for her child.

She lowered her child into the ditch.

The mother prayed to God.

She prayed to God.

Kutma beseeched the Sun God.

The child stared at his mother’s face.

He stared back at his mother’s face.

Tears rolled down Kutma’s face.

‘O Lord, pay heed to my pleadings,’ said she.

‘O Lord, pay heed to my pleadings.

O Sun, watch over this child of yours.’

Kutma named her child Kiran Kunvar.¹⁶

She named her child Kiran Kunvar.

She implored the earth to come to her succour.

‘O Mother Earth,’ pleaded she.





‘O Mother Earth,
I leave this child in your care.’

Kutma hugged her son for the last time.
She hugged her son for the last time.
Gently she covered the pit with a slab of stone.

‘O mother earth,’ she said again.
‘O mother earth,
Watch over my Karan forever!’

‘I leave my son in your care.
I leave my son in your care.
I leave him in your lap.’

With halting steps Kutma walked back.
With halting steps she walked back.
Leaving her son behind Kutma walked away.

(Tambur)¹⁷ O maharaj!¹⁸

Kutma buried Karan alive in a dunghill. She spoke gently to her infant son, ‘Listen to what I say. I wish you well, O son! Grow into a strapping young man and if ever an enemy crosses your way, fight back bravely.’ She covered the pit with a stone and with halting steps, returned to the lake. She pondered for a while, ‘I’ll defile my guru’s dhuni if I go back in this condition.’ She took a bath. She picked up her indhoni of marva stalk. She placed it on her head. Hitching high the pitchers, she hurriedly returned to her guru’s dhuni.

The two sisters served the sages with reverence. But the sages perceived Kutma’s secret. They pondered for a while. ‘These girls have grown up. It will not be desirable to keep them here for long. They must be married off.’





Pandu, the king, ruled over the kingdom of Asanapari.
 He ruled over the kingdom of Asanapari.
 Andh Raja was the sovereign of Dhavlo Gadh.

The two sisters served the seven sages well.
 They served the seven sages well.
 They served them with reverence and care.

The rishis pondered for a while.
 They pondered for a while.
 They decided to wed Kutma with Pandu, the king.

Gatarpa was given away to Andh Raja.
 She was given away to Andh Raja.
 Gatarpa was wedded to King Andh Raja.

'You'll bear five sons, O Kutma,' said the rishis.
 'You'll bear five sons.
 Seventy-eight sons will be born to you, O Gatarpa,'
 blessed they.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Thus the sages blessed the brides. Gatarpa was promised seventy-eight sons and Kutma just five. Kutma was annoyed by this discrimination. 'You seem to favour my sister, O holy ones, why should I have only five sons? My sons will suffer on account of being fewer.' The sages created five scorpions. They also created a cow dung-cake and scores of teeming bugs beneath it. 'Go and lift that cow dung-cake,' they said to Kutma. As she lifted the dung-cake, the bugs wriggled out. The scorpions started feasting on them and in a twinkling of an eye, devoured them all. 'Listen to what we say, O Kutma,' said the holy men, 'You have no reason to be apprehensive. Your sons will be like these scorpions. They will be capable of





devouring vermin.’ Thus Kutma became the queen of Asanapari. She lived happily with Pandu, the king. Gatarpa was sent to Dhavlo Gadh. She spent her time blissfully.

On an auspicious day,
On an auspicious day,
The Sun shone brightly over the world.

One fine day an incident took place,
One fine day an incident took place,
Which turned out to be auspicious.

Kutma was in her menstrual period.
She was in her menstrual period.
Kutma pondered for a while.

The waking cock’s crowing heralded the day.
The waking cock’s crowing heralded the day.
The first streak of Sun brightened the sky.

Kutma adorned herself in many fine ways.
She adorned herself in many fine ways.
She summoned her handmaids.

‘Why did you call us at this early hour, O queen?
Why did you call us at this early hour?
For which urgent matter have you summoned us?’
asked they.

‘Listen carefully to what I say,’ said Kutma.
‘Listen carefully to what I say.
There is no time for delay.’

‘Before the morning Sun rises, O maids,





Before the morning Sun rises,
Take a set of new clothes and follow me.'

The maids hurried off to execute Kutma's order.
They hurried off to execute her order.
Kutma slipped on her silken footwear.

Hurriedly, they descended the palace of clouds.
Hurriedly, they descended the palace of clouds.
With long strides and short steps, they tore along the path.

Walking through the lanes and alleyways of Asanapari,
Walking through the lanes and alleyways of Asanapari,
They arrived at Ratnagar, the ocean.

Kutma removed her ornaments.
She removed her ornaments.
She took off her necklace and upper garment.

Kutma let her hair fall loose.
She let her hair fall loose.
The maids rubbed saffron oil in Kutma's hair.

The queen stepped into the ocean waters.
She stepped into the ocean waters.
She played a game of sirkaliya with her maids.

After some time they came ashore.
After some time they came ashore.
The queen was clad in just one fine garment.

As she was getting dressed,
As she was getting dressed,
Yamraj, the God of Death, had a glimpse of her.





The God was smitten by her.
The God was smitten by her.
He felt a strong attraction to her.

His gaze penetrated the queen.
His gaze penetrated the queen.
Kutma felt her belly churning.

She puked, the maids washed her soiled clothes.
She puked, the maids washed her soiled clothes.
Hastily, they returned to the palace of clouds.

Slowly they ascended the steps of the cloud-capped palace.
Slowly they ascended the steps of the cloud-capped palace.
The maids made a bed for their queen.

The maids spread a silk mattress on her couch.
They spread a silk mattress on her couch.
The queen reclined on her high couch.

The maids gently fanned her with hand fans.
They gently fanned her with hand fans.
On a high couch, Kutma rested.

Kutma desired various delicacies.
She desired various delicacies.
She summoned her handmaids once again.

‘Listen carefully to what I say, O maids,’ said she.
‘Listen carefully to what I say,
Hot and steaming *suvaro* I wish to relish.’

Hastily, the maids raced to the marketplace.
Hastily, they raced to the marketplace.





They ran through the lanes and alleyways.

The maids arrived at the sweetmeat shop.

They arrived at the sweetmeat shop.

‘O listen to what we say, brother shopkeeper,’ said they.

‘We want the best of your suvario, brother,

We want the best of your suvario.’

The shopkeeper mixed thirty different spices and herbs.

He prepared flavoured suvario for the queen.

He prepared flavoured suvario for the queen.

The maids returned with hasty steps to the
cloud-capped palace.

‘Here is your favourite dish, O queen,’ said they.

Here is your favourite dish.’

The queen ate with relish.

The days rolled into months.

The days rolled into months.

Kutma’s belly swelled as the child grew within.

One day as the Sun declined behind the western hills,

One day as the Sun declined behind the western hills,

And the parakeets returned to their nests,

The maids served the queen her meal.

They served the queen her meal.

But Kutma was restless that day.

At the end of nine months and nine days,

At the end of nine months and nine days,

The queen was in labour.





As the Sun appeared on the eastern horizon,
As the Sun appeared on the eastern horizon,
The queen summoned her maids.

Fifteen in place of one came to her attendance.
Fifteen in place of one came to her attendance.
'Make haste, call a midwife, O maids,' said the queen.

The maids raced down the stairs of the cloud-capped palace.
They raced down the stairs of the cloud-capped palace.
'O midwife, are you asleep or awake?' cried they.

'If you are asleep, it's time to awake.
If asleep, it's time to awake.
If you're up then open the gate.'

A startled midwife sprang to her feet.
A startled midwife sprang to her feet.
'Who's calling me at this hour?' said she.

'Make haste, there's no time to delay, O midwife.
Make haste, there's no time to delay.
Our queen has labour pangs.'

Holding tight her walking stick,
Holding tight her walking stick,
The midwife went with hasty steps.

'Bring some oil in a bowl,' said the midwife.
'Bring some oil in a bowl.
Help your queen onto an old mattress.'

'Make haste, there's no time to delay,' said she.
'Make haste, there is no time for delay.'





The midwife thus busied herself.

The queen was about to give birth to a child.

The queen was about to give birth to a child.

It was a blessing of the God of Death.

A son was born to Kutma, the queen.

A son was born to Kutma, the queen.

The prince was named Jethodar.¹⁹

Kutma worshipped Lord Indar.

She worshipped Lord Indar.

Indar was pleased with her.

Indar blessed her with a son.

He blessed her with a son.

She called the child Arjhan.²⁰

Kutma then worshipped the God of Wind.

She worshipped the God of Wind.

The Wind God blessed her with a son called Bhemjhal.²¹

Kutma worshipped Shiv, the Lord.

She worshipped Shiv, the Lord.

Consequently, Sadev²² was born to her.

Kutma worshiped the God of Water.

She worshipped the God of Water.

She got Nakro²³ as a son.

The heads of the Pandav brothers were as huge as coconuts.

The heads of the Pandav brothers were as huge as coconuts.

They were endowed with deep dark eyes.





Their pointed noses looked like a flame of fire.

Their pointed noses looked like a flame of fire.

Their teeth were set in fine rows.

Their chests were broad like the summit of Mount Abu.

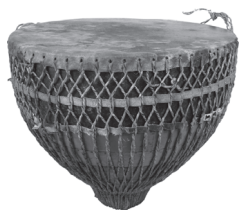
Their chests were broad like the summit of Mount Abu.

Their arms looked like the branches of a banyan tree.

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Bhasha





PANDU, THE KING

One day the Sun declined behind the western hills.
The Sun declined behind the western hills.
The parakeets returned to their nests.

Lamps were lit at every niche in the palace.
Lamps were lit at every niche in the palace.
Pandu, the king, had drifted into deep slumber.

Pandu, the king, dreamt a dream.
He dreamt a dream.

Iyaro, the God of Hunting, appeared in his dream.

‘Go out hunting in the Meru-Sumeru mountains,
O king,’ said the deity.

Go out hunting in the Meru-Sumeru mountains.’
The king awoke with a start.

‘What a strange dream I had,’ pondered he.
‘What a strange dream I had!’
He kept tossing and turning in bed.

The waking cock’s crowing heralded the day.
The waking cock’s crowing heralded the day.





The first streak of light brightened the sky.

Pandu, the king, pondered for a while.

He pondered for a while.

He cleaned his teeth and rinsed his mouth.

Pandu offered prayers to the rising Sun.

He offered prayers to the rising Sun.

He picked up his bow and arrows.

Pandu's bow was full six cubits long.

His bow was full six cubits long.

His quiver contained seven long arrows.

Pandu, the king, put up a hide on the mountain.

The king put up a hide on the mountain.

But not a single animal came that way.

The Sun rose high in the sky.

The Sun rose high in the sky.

The earth turned into a heated hearth.

The king was thirsty, his throat became parched.

The king was thirsty, his throat became parched.

In search of water he set out.

By following a trail of animals,

By following a trail of animals,

Pandu reached the Khanda lake.

Pandu quenched his thirst with the water of the lake.

He quenched his thirst with the water of the lake.

He erected a hide to conceal himself.

Pandu saw a pair of deer coming by.





He saw a pair of deer coming by.
Holding his breath, the king waited for them.

The stag and his doe approached the lake.
The stag and his doe approached the lake.
As they came near, the king took aim.

(Tambur) O maharaj.

Seven rishis had taken a vow to meditate for twelve years. They sat in deep meditation. A stag and his doe lived by the dhuni. They watched over the sacred fire for twelve long years. When the thirteenth year began the rishis opened their eyes. They were pleased with the deer's devotion. They said, 'Listen to what we say, O deer. You watched over our sacred fire. Because of you, our vow was fulfilled. We grant you the kingdom of this forest.' The deer were thirsty. They had not been away from the dhuni for twelve years. They went to the lake to drink water. *O maharaj!* The stag and his doe had not mated for twelve years. They indulged in love. Pandu, the king, saw them from his hiding place.

One fine day something happened which turned out to be very auspicious. The king drew his bow string, aimed, and discharged his arrow at the rutting stag. The stag fell with a roar. His doe cursed the king, 'Listen, O king, after twelve long years we were mating. You split our pair of stag and doe. You have sinned. You too will die while making love.' Saying this, she fell on her mate and her soul left her mortal frame.

Pandu pondered for a while, 'I have committed a heinous sin. I'll have to pay for it.' With folded hands, he supplicated the dying deer.

Pandu, the king, returned to his palace.
He returned to his palace.





He lay back on his high couch.

As he reclined, the curse claimed his life.

As he reclined, the curse claimed his life.

‘Our father has left his mortal frame,’ cried the Pandav.

‘The king’s *karma* resulted in his death, O sons,’ said Kutma.

The king’s *karma* resulted in his death.

Arrange for his *samadhi*!’

Pandu’s *samadhi* was dug in the glistening green garden.

Pandu’s *samadhi* was dug in the glistening green garden.

Beating on a *sangi dhol* they gave Pandu a burial.

The Pandav brothers mourned for twelve days.

They mourned for twelve days.

For twelve days they mourned their father’s death.

The sons of Pandu became the rulers of Asanapari.

They became the rulers of Asanapari.

The Pandavs were the sovereign of Asanapari.

The Pandavs were the first living Gods of the land of the mortals.

They were the first living Gods of the land of the mortals.

They were the Gods among the mortal beings.

Long live the mother that bore them.

Long live the mother that bore them.

The Pandavs’ mother should be blessed.

People flourished under their rule.

People flourished under their rule.

They brought glory to their kingdom.

One day the Pandavs picked up their bows and arrows.





They picked up their bows and arrows.
They decided to go hunting.

Their bows were twelve cubits long.
Their bows were twelve cubits long.
Their bows weighed thirteen *manns*.

The Pandav princes set out hunting.
They set out hunting.
They went to the forest called Kadli.

The Pandav princes roamed in the wilderness.
They roamed in the wilderness.
They put on hides to conceal themselves.

It was a luckless day.
It was a luckless day.
Neither wild boars nor sambhars came.

Suddenly, the Pandav brothers beheld a girl.
They beheld a girl.
A beautiful maiden was approaching.

The Pandavs spoke to the maiden.
They spoke to the maiden.
'Listen to what we say, O maiden.'

'Whose daughter and whose wife are you?
Whose daughter and whose wife are you?
From where do you come and what is your destination?'

'You better mind your own business, O Pandavs,'
said the maiden.

'You better mind your own business.'





I am coming from a far off land.'

'Listen to what I say, O Pandavs.

Listen to what I say.

Why do you ask me such questions?'

'I hail from a far off land, O Pandavs.

I hail from a far off land.

But tell me if I can oblige you in any way.'

'You are supposed to be wife to five brothers, O dame!

You are supposed to be wife to five brothers.

We'll take you to our palace.'

'Why do you want to take me with you, O Pandavs?

Why do you want to take me with you?

Why should I come to your palace?' asked the maiden.

'We want to marry you, O dame,' said the Pandav princes.

'We want to marry you.

From today you'll live with us.'

'How can I wed five grooms?' asked she.

'How can I have five grooms?

Who'd be my consort?'

The Pandavs chanced on Dhofa²⁴ in the Kadli forest.

They chanced on Dhofa in the Kadli forest.

In the Kadli forest they met her.

The Pandavs took her to Asanapari.

They took her to Asanapari.

To Asanapari they took Dhofa.

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KARAN, THE PANDAV

On an auspicious day,
On an auspicious day,
The Sun shone brightly over the world.

One fine day an incident took place,
One fine day an incident took place,
Which turned out to be auspicious.

Dublo, the *mali*, and Mansa, the *malan* of Dhavlo Gadh,
A mali and malan of Dhavlo Gadh,
Were conversing with each other.

The malan said to the mali,
She said to the mali,
'Listen to what I say.'

'We live a wretched life.
We live a wretched life.
We lead the life of destitutes.'

'Go to the court of the Kaurav princes, O mali,' said she.
'Go to the court of the Kaurav princes.
To the royal assembly of the Kauravs, you must go.'





'Listen carefully to what I say, O mali!
Listen carefully to what I say.
Tell our rulers to grant you a wish.'

'Ask for a piece of land, O mali.
Ask for a piece of land.
Ask for a farm which has a well.'

'Ask for a pit full of dung, O mali.
Ask for a pit full of dung.
We need some manure to make the land fertile.'

In his worn-out footwear, Dublo, the mali, set off.
In his worn-out footwear, the mali set off.
The mali set off in his torn and tattered footwear.

The mali trod along the road.
He trod along the road.
Bidding farewell to his wife, the mali left home.

The mali wandered through the lanes and alleyways.
He wandered through the lanes and alleyways.
He passed through the streets of Dhavlo Gadh.

He left behind the marketplace.
He left behind the marketplace.
He reached the royal court of the Kaurav princes.

With a flutter in his heart and timid steps,
With a flutter in his heart and timid steps,
He entered the court of the Kaurav princes.

In the splendid court of the Kauravs,
In the splendid court of the Kauravs,





The courtiers were discussing courtly matters.

Fierce-looking courtiers in the royal assembly,
Fierce-looking courtiers in the royal assembly,
Courtiers with thick moustaches were sitting upright.

They were engrossed in relating tales of bravery.
They were engrossed in relating tales of bravery.
The mali entered the court furtively.

Tongue-tied, he stood at a distance.
Tongue-tied, he stood at a distance.
He bowed courteously to the assembly.

Standing on one leg,
Standing on one leg,
The mali trembled like a dry leaf.

'I am your subject, O king,' said he.
'I am your subject.
Kindly listen to what I say.'

Thus the mali entreated the king for a favour.
He entreated the king for a favour.
The king listened to him intently.

'Listen to what I say, O mali,' said the king.
'Listen to what I say.
I'll grant you your wish.'

'I'll give you a small piece of land.
I'll give you a small piece of land.
I'll give you a farm with a well.'

Encouraged, the mali took a step forward.





Encouraged, the mali took a step forward.
'Kindly also give me a pit full of dung,' said he.

'The dunghill at the outskirts, O mali,
The dunghill at the outskirts,
If you wish, it is all yours.'

The mali prostrated at the feet of the king.
He prostrated at the feet of the king.
Hurriedly, he descended the steps of the
cloud-capped palace.

With long strides and short steps,
With long strides and short steps,
He walked across the Suraj Pol.

The malan was waiting impatiently.
She was waiting impatiently.
She strained her eyes to see the mali.

The mali walked with a skip in his step.
The mali walked with a skip in his step.
Hastily, he walked towards his house.

'The king must have been kind to him,' pondered the malan.
'The king must have been kind to him.
He looks happy and content.'

As the mali came closer,
As the mali came closer,
Eagerly, the malan spoke to him.

'What did our king give you?
What did our king give you?





Tell me quickly as I cannot wait.'

The mali sat on the cot and said,
He sat on a cot and said,
'First, why don't you give me some water?'

The malan fetched him some water.
She fetched him some water.
She waited for the mali to drink water.

'He gave us a farm with a well,' said the mali.
'He has given us a farm with a well.
He has given us land near the dunghill.'

The man and his wife,
The man and his wife,
Delighted, they sat conversing.

'Listen carefully to what I say, O mali,' said his wife.
'Listen carefully to what I say.
There is no time to delay.'

'Let us go and have a look at the well, O mali.
Let us go and have a look at the well.
We should visit our field.'

In worn out and frayed footwear,
In worn out and frayed footwear,
The mali and his wife set off for their land.

They walked around their farm.
They walked around their farm.
They glanced inside the well.

The well was full of water.





It was full of water.

It was surrounded by flowering plants.

‘God has not blessed us with any children,’ said the malan.

‘God has not blessed with any children.

But the king has blessed us with this well and farm.’

‘We’ll till this farm as long as we can, O mali.

We’ll till the farm as long as we can.

Then we’ll hire a farmhand and retire.’

Thus, Mansa, the malan, spoke to her husband.

Thus she spoke to her husband.

‘Listen to what I say.’

‘Go and get a water wheel, O mali.

Go and get a water wheel.

Make haste as the monsoon will soon set in.’

Hurriedly, the mali trod along the path.

He trod along the path.

He took the way to Kathiawad.

The mali left Dhavlo Gadh behind.

He left Dhavlo Gadh behind.

He walked through many a strange place.

The mali reached the land of Kathiawad.

He reached the land of Kathiawad.

He reached the outskirts of Kathiawad.

The mali enquired about Lalu, the workman.

He enquired about Lalu, the workman.

‘Someone please show me Lalu’s place,’ said he.





The mali found Lalu's house.
He found Lalu's house.
Lalu's name he called aloud.

The mali greeted Lalu as he came out.
He greeted Lalu as he came out.
He bowed to Lalu the workman as he stepped out.

'What do you want, O stranger?' Lalu asked.
'What do you want?
Why have you come to my house?'

'I want to buy a water wheel from you,' said the mali.
'I want to buy a water wheel.
I have come here for a water wheel.'

'Pay the price and the water wheel is yours,' said Lalu.
'Pay the price and it is yours.
Give me money for the water wheel.'

The mali promised to pay in future.
He promised to pay in future.
He wound his way back with the water wheel.

The mali walked past the Kadli forest.
He walked past the Kadli forest.
He took the way to Dhavlo Gadh.

The malan was waiting impatiently.
She was waiting impatiently.
She was waiting for her husband.

As she saw him coming,
As she saw him coming,





She cooked thirty-two kinds of delicacies.

The mali relished the delicacies.

He relished the delicacies.

They talked while eating the sumptuous meal.

‘Listen to what I say, O mali.

Listen to what I say.

O mali, lend me your ear.’

‘The monsoon is fast approaching.

The monsoon is fast approaching.

It’s time to manure the field.’

‘Hire a cart from a farmer in the town, O mali.

Hire a cart from a farmer in the town.

There is no time to delay.’

With long strides and short steps the mali went.

With long strides and short steps he went.

He trod along the way.

The mali went to the farmer’s quarters.

He went to the farmer’s quarters.

‘O farmer, please come out and listen to what I say.’

‘I wish to hire your cart, O farmer.

I wish to hire your cart.

I have come to hire a cart.’

The farmer lent his cart to the mali.

The farmer lent his cart to the mali.

The mali left with the cart.

The malan came with a shovel and a basket.





She came with a shovel and a basket.

She put them in the cart.

The malan sat at the back of the cart.

She sat at the back of the cart.

The mali and his wife started off for their farm.

The mali whipped the white oxen.

He whipped the white oxen.

Hastily, they took the way to the outskirts.

Mansa, the malan, said to her husband,

Mansa, the malan, said to her husband,

‘Listen carefully to what I say.’

‘Let us shovel out the dunghill, O mali.

Let us shovel out the dunghill.

Load the dung in the cart.’

The mali pulled the cart up by the dunghill.

He pulled the cart up by the dunghill.

They began to scoop out the manure.

They loaded the dung onto the cart.

They loaded the dung onto the cart.

They turned the cart towards their farm.

They dumped the manure in the farm.

They dumped the manure in the farm.

They spread the manure with the shovel.

The malan moved about the field.

She moved about the field.

She moved about her farm to spread the manure.





The malan saw a huge slab of stone.
She saw a huge slab of stone.
She saw a slab of stone lying in her field.

The malan tried to move it aside.
She tried to move it aside.
She bent to draw the slab aside.

The malan hitched high her sari.
She hitched high her sari.
She heaved the slab with all her might.

The malan drew out the slab.
She drew out the slab.
The malan pulled away the stone from where it lay.

As she removed the slab of stone,
As she removed the slab of stone,
A big hole was seen beneath.

The malan stooped down to look.
She stooped down to look.
She bent over the pit.

The malan strained her eyes to look into the pit.
She strained her eyes to look into the pit.
She caught sight of a small child.

‘O gracious God!’ exclaimed she.
‘O gracious God!
Fortune has smiled upon us.’

Dublo, the mali, heard her shout.
He heard her shout.





He rushed to the pit to see what she had found.

‘Listen to what I say, O mali,’ said she.

‘Listen to what I say.

We had no children but now we are blessed with one.’

‘He will support us in our old age,’ said she.

‘He will support us in our old age.

We have an offspring for our advanced age.’

They lifted the child with care.

They lifted the child with care.

They gently laid him on a silk mattress.

The child opened his eyes and looked around.

The child opened his eyes and looked around.

He stared back at the malan.

He started sucking his thumb.

He started sucking his thumb.

He brought his thumb to his mouth.

The mali pondered for a while.

He pondered for a while.

He mused over the change in their fate.

‘Lend me your ear, O mali,’ said the malan.

‘Lend me your ear.

Listen carefully to what I say.’

‘Rush to the marketplace, O mali.

Rush to the marketplace.

Go to a bania’s shop.’





'Buy some incense sticks, O mali.
Buy some incense sticks.
Some incense sticks you must get.

'And buy some *kumkum* powder, O mali.
And buy some kumkum powder.
There is no time to delay.'

With long strides and short steps,
With long strides and short steps,
The mali rushed to the marketplace.

The malan heated some water in a copper vessel.
She heated some water in a copper vessel.
She hastily heated the water.

The mali went to the bania's shop.
He went to the bania's shop.
He asked for some incense.

There he bought some kumkum powder.
He bought some kumkum powder.
Hastily he ran back home.

The mali returned home.
He returned home.
He took his bath and changed into a new pair of clothes.

The malan also had a bath.
She too had a bath.
She wore a new set of clothes.

The malan gave her son a bath.
She gave her son a bath.





She bathed the baby boy.

The malan wrapped the child in a piece of cloth.

She wrapped the child in a piece of cloth.

The child was wrapped in a square of cloth.

The malan laid the child in a cradle.

She laid the child in a cradle.

Gently, she placed the child in a cradle.

The malan offered *gugal* to the Gods.

She offered gugal to the Gods.

She lit the incense sticks.

She performed *aarti* to them.

She performed aarti to them.

She chanted the name of Lord Ram.

The malan pleaded to Lord Ram.

She pleaded to him,

'We bow to your benevolence, Avatar!'

'We had no child of our own.

We had no child of our own.

But you gave us a son in our old age.'

'How do we rear him ?

How do we rear him ?

We lack the strength and the means.'

'How do I feed my son, Malek?

How do I feed my son?

Fill my sunken breasts with milk.'





The God heard her pleas.
He heard her pleas.
The malan's request he fulfilled.

The malan's breasts became heavy with milk.
They became heavy with milk.
O, how the malan's requests were fulfilled !

The malan took her son in her lap.
She took her son in her lap.
She put his mouth to her breast.

Karan, the child, was rocked in a golden crib.
He was rocked in a golden crib.
A silk thread was attached to his crib.

Karan grew by day and night.
He grew by day and night.
He started crawling around.

Karan teetered and tottered around.
He teetered and tottered around.
He crawled and tumbled as he learnt to walk.

Karan started toddling.
He started toddling.
Soon he started playing in the backyard.

Karan started playing in the streets.
He started playing in the streets.
He wandered in the marketplace.

One fine day an incident took place,
One fine day an incident took place,





Which turned out to be very auspicious.

Karan went to the farm with his oxen.

He went to the farm with his oxen.

He wanted to water his crop.

His oxen moved back and forth.

His oxen moved back and forth.

Karan urged his oxen to pull at the water wheel.

As Karan was drawing water from the well,

As he was drawing water from the well,

A herd of elephants arrived.

Elephants of the Kaurav king,

Elephants of the Kaurav king,

The herd of elephants came to the field.

The elephants drank the water Karan had drawn out.

The elephants drank the water Karan had drawn out.

They stood at the well to quench their thirst.

Karan spoke to the herdsman.

He spoke to the cowherd.

‘Listen to what I say.’

‘Lead away your elephants.

Lead away your elephants.

I want to water my standing crop.’

The herdsman did not pay heed.

He did not pay heed.

He did not comply with Karan’s request.





Karan was annoyed with the herdsman.
He was annoyed with the herdsman.
Once again he asked him to go away.

‘Take away your elephants,’ said he.
‘Take away your elephants.
Or be prepared for the consequences.’

But the herdsman paid no attention.
He paid no attention.
The mali’s son got furious.

Karan stepped forward.
He stepped forward.
He went to the leader of the elephants.

Karan undid the chain from the elephant’s leg.
He undid the chain from the elephant’s leg.
He whacked the elephant on the head.

The elephant’s head was severed and fell into the ocean.
The elephant’s head was severed and fell into the ocean.
Its lifeless trunk rolled into the well.

The leader of the herd was slain.
The leader of the herd was slain.
The Kauravs’ biggest elephant got killed.

Karan flung the trunk away.
He flung the trunk away.
He urged his oxen to draw out water.

The herdsman watched from a distance.
He watched from a distance.





He could not believe what he had seen.

The herdsman trembled like dead leaves.

He trembled like dead leaves.

Terror-stricken, he became feverish.

The herdsman turned on his heels to flee.

He turned on his heels to flee.

He ran towards his king's court.

The herdsman ran towards the town.

He ran towards the town.

He proceeded straight to the royal court of the king.

The herdsman stumbled as he entered the court.

He stumbled as he entered the court.

The herdsman collapsed on the ground.

At the royal court of the Kaurav king,

At the royal court of the Kaurav king,

Tales of bravery were being related.

The courtiers of the Kaurav court,

The courtiers of the Kaurav court,

They saw the herdsman reeling on the floor.

The Kaurav king pondered for a while.

He pondered for a while.

'Tell us the tale of your woe, O herdsman,' said he.

'Who has beaten and battered you, O herdsman?' asked the king.

'Who has beaten and battered you?

Why do you look so distressed?'

The herdsman wept and wailed.





He wept and wailed.
Lamenting, he narrated his tale.

‘Ill has been done in the world, O king.
Ill has been done in the world.
Evil has befallen us.’

‘Our biggest elephant has been killed, O king.
Our biggest elephant has been killed.
The son of a mali has slain him.’

‘He has cut off the elephant’s head, O king.
He has cut off the elephant’s head.
The son of a mali has severed the elephant’s head.’

‘You seem to be out of your wits, O herdsman.
You seem to be out of your wits.
Have you gone crazy?’ said the king.

‘How can a child kill our mammoth elephant?
How can a child kill our mammoth elephant?
I cannot believe what you say,’ said the Kaurav king.

Daljhojhan,²⁵ the king turned to his brothers.
He turned to his brothers.

‘Lend me your ear, my brave brothers.’

‘Go to the farm and find out,’ said he.
‘Go to the farm and find out.
How our elephant was killed.’

A brood of seventy-eight brothers,
A brood of seventy-eight brothers,
They reached the farm of the mali to investigate.





‘Listen, O child, listen to us.
Listen O child, listen to us.
Who has killed our elephant?’

(Tambur) O maharaj!

The Kaurav princes set out to probe the elephant’s death. They said to Karan, ‘Who has killed our elephant? He was the mightiest among the herd. He would not budge unless prodded by a rod weighing forty seers. He was such a magnificent animal! How was he killed? Tell us, who killed him?’ Karan said to the Kaurav princes, ‘Your herd of elephants intruded into my land. They drank the water I had drawn from the well. My glistening green farm withered on that account. That is why I killed your mammoth elephant. And if you care for your life, you better clear out of my sight.’ The Kauravs were amazed by Karan’s audacity. ‘Look at this child talking like this!’ They were not aware of the child’s strength. ‘You have locked horns with us, O child. Brace up and be prepared for the worst,’ they challenged Karan.

Karan stood upright to one side. Seventy-eight Kauravs were getting ready to strike. Karan pulled on his mighty bow. The arrow blocked the way of the Kauravs. The Kauravs looked at the arrow with awe. ‘None but a Pandav is capable of such a feat,’ said they, ‘He must be one of the Pandavs.’ The Kauravs took to their heels. They fled Karan’s farm.

The Kaurav brothers raced back to Daljhojhan’s court. They spoke breathlessly, ‘Listen to what we say, O brother. Although he is a small child, the son of the mali is endowed with extraordinary strength.’ Daljhojhan could not believe his ears. He decided to visit the farm himself. He saw the child at the well. Daljhojhan pondered for a while, ‘He is not an ordinary lad. I should make him my ally. He is sure to stand by me in distress.’





Seventy-eight Kauravs took to their heels.

They took to their heels.

They bounded away to save their lives.

The mali was watching from a distance.

He was watching from a distance.

‘Lend me your ear, my wife,’ said he.

‘Our child must be the son of a great man.

He must be the son of a great man.

He is not an ordinary lad,’ said the mali.

The mali and his wife,

The mali and his wife,

They bowed down to Kiran Kunvar, the Pandav.

The mali and malan said to their child,

They said to their child,

‘Forgive us if we have done you any wrong.’

‘You are meant to be a king.

You are meant to be a king.

You are not the son of a mali.’

Daljhojhan made Karan the king.

He made Karan the king.

The kingdom of Gokul Gadh was entrusted to him.

Karan wisely ruled over Gokul Gadh.

He wisely ruled over Gokul Gadh.

His name has become immortal.

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DHOFA AND VASANG

The queen of Arjhan was in deep slumber.
She was in deep slumber.
She was snoring softly.

The maids were combing her hair.
They were combing her hair.
They were combing her hair with great care.

The queen had golden hair.
She had golden hair.
Gently her maids combed her long golden hair.

A strand of golden hair came off.
A strand of golden hair came off.
While the maids were combing, a strand of hair came off.

The maids were startled.
They were startled.
They stared at one another in dismay.

‘If the queen should come to know,
If she should come to know,
We’ll be flogged for our negligence.’





'The laws of the Pandavs are very severe.
The laws of the Pandavs are very severe.
They'll take our lives for such carelessness.'

They wound the hair into a small skein.
They wound the hair into a small skein.
Into a skein the golden hair was wound.

The maids tucked it into a window-pane.
They tucked it into a window-pane.
They hid the skein in the window-pane.

But the skein of golden hair dangled by the window.
The skein of golden hair dangled by the window.
Swaying in the gentle breeze.

The queen of Arjhan was in deep slumber.
She was in deep slumber.
She was snoring gently.

The curl of golden hair swayed in the wind.
It swayed in the wind.
The wind became capricious.

'I'll rock the world with my capering,' thought the wind.
I'll rock the world with my capering.
I'll show how naughty I can be!'

A fierce wind blew over Asanapari.
A fierce wind blew over Asanapari.
Asanapari was caught in a whirlwind.

The wind carried away the hair of gold.
It carried away the hair of gold.





The skein of hair drifted in the wind.

As the wind calmed down,

As the wind calmed down,

The golden hair floated slowly down to the ground.

As the hair of gold fell, the earth gave way.

As it fell on the ground, the earth gave way.

To the netherworld it went.

The ruler of the netherworld was in deep slumber.

He was in deep slumber.

Vasang,²⁶ the king of paatal, was snoring softly.

His queens were fanning him gently.

His queens were fanning him gently.

The king was lying on his high couch.

The curl of golden hair,

The curl of golden hair,

Fell on the chest of the sleeping king.

Vasang awoke with a start.

He awoke with a start.

The king of paatal was astounded.

The king felt about his chest.

He felt about his chest.

The curl of golden hair stuck to his hand.

The king was amazed.

He was amazed.

He gazed at the golden hair.





'It seems to be the hair of a dame.
It seems to be the hair of a dame.
Never before have I seen golden hair.'

Vasang, the king, pondered for a while.
He pondered for a while.
From his high couch he sprang up.

The king ran out of his palace.
He ran out of his palace.
Hastily, he fled his palace.

'Listen to what we say, O king,' said his queens.
'Listen to what we say.
Where are you headed in such haste?'

'I am going to the earth, O queens,' said the king.
'I'm going to the earth.
I am going in search of the woman with golden hair.'

'Listen carefully to what we say, O king,' said the queens.
'Listen carefully to what we say.
Don't get involved in a woman's affairs.'

'Thinking about somebody else's woman invites ill, O king.
Thinking about somebody else's woman invites ill.
Banish the idea of enjoying that woman.'

'We'll keep you happy in bed for twelve years, O king.
We'll keep you happy in bed for twelve years.
We, your seven queens, shall make you happy in turns.'

'Don't you worry about me, O queens,' said the king.
'Don't you worry about me.'





I'll catch a glimpse of that woman and return
to my kingdom.'

The king adorned himself in many fine ways.
He adorned himself in many fine ways.
The king wore his best adornments.

The queens tried in vain to stop him.
The queens tried in vain.
The seven of them watched him leave.

The king saddled his swiftest horse.
He saddled his swiftest horse.
He pulled the rein and rode off.

Vasang, the king, rode off on his horse.
He rode off on his horse.
Clouds of dust arose as he rode along.

The king cracked the whip at his horse.
He cracked the whip at his horse.
He was cruel to his horse on that day.

They reached the land of the mortals.
They reached the land of the mortals.
From the netherworld they arrived on the earth.

They reached a green pasture.
They reached a green pasture.
Vasang pulled the reins of his horse and stopped.

The king pondered for a while.
He pondered for a while.
'In which direction should I go?'





The king turned his horse to the west.

He turned his horse to the west.

The horse galloped at great speed.

The king left behind many a city and town.

He left behind many a city and town.

He traversed through many strange lands.

The king wandered through lanes and alleyways.

He wandered through lanes and alleyways.

He searched in vain for a dame with golden hair.

The king stopped his horse by a lake.

He stopped his horse by a lake.

He was looking for a dame with golden hair.

Suddenly, the king caught sight of a palace of clouds.

He caught sight of a palace of clouds.

The palace of Asanapari captured his attention.

The king mounted his horse again.

He mounted his horse again.

He guided his horse towards the palace.

The king reached the outskirts.

He reached the outskirts.

He waited for a good omen before entering the town.

The king waited for an auspicious sign.

He waited for an auspicious sign.

He stopped outside the town for an omen.

A vennag's²⁷ call was heard to his right.

A vennag's call was heard to his right.





A *devlo* chirped from the left.

The king noticed the auspicious signs.

He noticed the auspicious signs.

He urged his horse to move.

The king entered the city.

The king entered the city.

Trotting on his horse, the king went inside Asanapari.

The ruler of paataal came to a garden.

The ruler of paataal came to a garden.

He arrived in the glistening green garden of Asanapari.

The king jumped off his horse.

He jumped off his horse.

He stopped by the glistening green garden.

The king tethered his horse to a tree trunk.

He tethered his horse to a tree trunk.

He collected some betel leaves for the horse.

Leaving his horse to graze,

Leaving his horse to graze,

The king of paataal walked out of the garden.

The king held a stick in his hand.

He held a stick in his hand.

He swished it as he walked.

The king took the way to the palace of clouds.

He took the way to the palace of clouds.

He walked towards the cloud-capped palace.





The queen was swinging on a *hindola*.
She was swinging on a hindola.
Her golden hair reflected the sun rays.

The queen saw a stranger coming to the palace.
She saw a stranger coming to the palace.
From her swing, she saw someone approaching.

The queen called her handmaids.
She called her handmaids.
'Someone is coming this way,' said she.

'He must be heading for the royal court.
He must be heading for the royal court.
The stranger must have come this way by mistake.'

'Go and show him the way to the court,' said the queen.
'Go and show him the way to the court.
Guide him to the royal assembly.'

The maids hurriedly went to the stranger.
They hurriedly went to the stranger.
They showed him the way to the court.

Swishing his stick the king came.
Swishing his stick the king came.
The maids stood blocking his way.

The maids said to the king,
They said to the king,
'This is not the way to the royal assembly.'

'This way leads to the queen's palace.
It leads to the queen's palace.





You seem to have lost your way.'

'I don't want to go to the assembly of your king,' said Vasang.

'I don't want to go to the assembly of your king.

I am not heading for his court.'

'I am going to your queen's palace.

I am going to your queen's palace.

I want to see your queen,' said Vasang, the king.

'I have been with women all my life,' said the king.

'I've been with women all my life.

Take me to your queen, don't block my way.'

The queen was watching from her swing.

She was watching from her swing.

'This man seems to be obstinate,' mused she.

The ruler of the netherworld,

The ruler of the netherworld,

With hasty steps he ascended the stairs.

The queen brought the swing to a halt.

She brought the swing to a halt.

'O, this man is heading towards me.'

The queen started for the inner quarter.

She started for the inner quarter.

She tried to evade the stranger's advance.

The end of her chundadi slipped off her head.

The end of her chundadi slipped off her head.

Her chundadi came off as she ran.





The golden locks of her hair,
The golden locks of her hair,
The king noticed her golden hair.

The king flicked his whip around her waist.
He flicked his whip around her waist.
He tried to stop the fleeing queen.

The king could not take his eyes off her hair of gold.
He could not take his eyes off her hair of gold.
He struck the queen on her chest.

The queen of Arjhan fell.
The queen of Arjhan fell.
She tumbled down on the floor.

The king loomed over the queen.
He loomed over the queen.
Quickly, he leapt to grasp the queen.

The queen cried out in pain.
She cried out in pain.
She shouted at Vasang.

‘Listen to what I say, O stranger,’ said she.
‘Listen to what I say.
I implore you to lend me your ear.’

‘I know not who is your wife,’ said the queen.
‘I know not who your wife is.
I don’t know whether you’ve a consort.’

‘But why do you assault me?
Why do you assault me?





What has made you come to my palace?’

‘If Arjhan sees you assaulting me,
If Arjhan sees you assaulting me,
He’ll punish you severely.’

Vasang lifted the queen to her bed.
He lifted the queen to her bed.
He laid Dhofa on a high couch.

The queen tried to free herself in vain.
She tried to free herself in vain.
She struggled to get free.

‘I have been dying to see you, O queen,’ said Vasang.
‘I have been dying to see you.
I have suffered many a hardship for your sake.’

‘Heat some water for me, my queen,’ said Vasang.
‘Heat some water for me.
Bathe me with your gentle hands.’

‘How dare you talk so to me?’ said the queen.
‘How dare you talk so to me?
Aren’t you ashamed of your words?’

The king of the netherworld stared hard at her.
He stared hard at her.
The queen felt threatened.

Dhofa heated water in a copper vessel.
She heated water in a copper vessel.
The queen of Arjhan heated water for a stranger.

The queen of Arjhan helped Vasang have a bath.





She helped Vasang have a bath.

The king of paataal had a bath.

Vasang adorned himself in many fine ways.

He adorned himself in many fine ways.

He came to the queen and said,

‘Listen to what I say, O queen,

Listen to what I say,

Prepare thirty-two kinds of delicacies for me.’

The king stared hard at her.

He stared hard at her.

The frightened queen cooked him sumptuous dishes.

The queen served him on a gold salver.

She served him on a gold salver.

She served him thirty-two kinds of preparations.

Reclining on the royal couch,

Reclining on the royal couch,

The king ate from the hands of Arjhan’s spouse.

‘You are a guest from an unknown land,’ said the queen.

‘You are a guest from an unknown land.

You have come from a distant land.’

‘But you’d better go back to your home.

But you’d better go back to your home.

O stranger king, why don’t you return to where you belong?’

‘A man does not just turn around like that, my queen.

A man does not just turn around like that.

I have not come to go back,’ said Vasang.





'I'll stay here for the night, O queen.
I'll stay here for the night.
In your palace I'll spend a night.'

'The royal assembly has come to an end,' said Dhofa.
'The royal assembly has come to an end.
The master of the house must be coming home.'

'You'd better leave before he arrives,' said Dhofa.
'You'd better leave before he arrives.
It's time for my king to return.'

'Don't be afraid, let Arjhan come, O queen,' said Vasang.
'Don't be afraid, let him come.
He is not my equal in strength.'

Arjhan ascended the stairs of the palace of clouds.
He ascended the stairs of the palace of clouds.
The steps trembled under his mighty steps.

The spires and domes of the palace of clouds,
The spires and domes of the palace of clouds,
Shook as Arjhan walked along the path.

Arjhan climbed the stairs of the palace of clouds.
He climbed the stairs of the palace of clouds.
With hasty steps he climbed the stairs.

As Arjhan entered his palace,
As he entered his palace,
He caught sight of a stranger.

Arjhan leapt upon the intruder.
He leapt upon the intruder.





He pounced upon the king of the netherworld.

Soon they were locked in a duel.

They were locked in a duel.

Each tried various ways to defeat his adversary.

Duelling, they soared high onto the heavenly winds.

They soared high onto the heavenly winds.

To the depths of the paataal, they glided.

The king of the netherworld,

The king of the netherworld,

Gripped Arjhan in his arms.

Vasang snapped a strand of his moustache loose.

He snapped a strand of his moustache loose.

He tied Arjhan's hands and legs with the strand.

The ruler of the netherworld,

The ruler of the netherworld,

He hanged Arjhan from a peg.

The queen laid a silk quilt on the couch.

She laid a silk quilt on the couch.

She spread sweet smelling flowers on the mattress.

The queen dabbed the mattress with musk oil.

She dabbed the mattress with musk oil.

Whiff of fragrance surrounded the bed.

Vasang made the queen sit beside him.

He made the queen sit beside him.

He cooed sweet words into her ears.

They played the game of *chopat*.





They played the game of chopat.
In turns they won and lost the game.

Arjhan watched them helplessly.
He watched them helplessly.
Hanging from the peg he gazed.

The ruler of the netherworld,
The ruler of the netherworld,
Forced himself on Arjhan's consort.

As the waking cock's crowing heralded the day,
As the waking cock's crowing heralded the day.
Vasang arose from the bed.

'Listen to what I say, O queen,' said he.
'Listen to what I say.
I'm invincible in this world.'

'Every night wait for me.
Every night wait for me.
Lay a mattress of silk for me.'

Vasang took out his radiant dagger.
He took out his radiant dagger.
He cut the hair that held Arjhan to the peg.

Arjhan fell with a thud.
He fell with a thud.
The helpless Pandav prince looked around.

The ruler of the netherworld,
The ruler of the netherworld,
Hurriedly, he descended the stairs of Arjhan's palace.





The ruler of the netherworld,
The ruler of the netherworld,
Reached the glistening green garden.

Vasang mounted his horse with a quick jerk.
He mounted his horse with a quick jerk.
He spurred the horse by cracking his whip.

Vasang rode back to the netherworld.
He rode back to the netherworld.
He returned home on his swift horse.

His queens prepared thirty-two kinds of delicacies.
The queens prepared thirty-two kinds of delicacies.
They laid the food on a golden plate.

His seven queens fussed over him.
They fussed over him.
But the king didn't pay them any attention.

'Listen to what I say, O queens,' said he.
'Listen to what I say.
It is impossible for me to eat this food.'

'I found a little stone in it.
I found a little stone in it.
Anyway, it's too spicy for me.'

'You've relished the food cooked by someone else.
You've relished the food cooked by someone else.
So you won't like food cooked by us,' said the queens.

The king somehow whiled the day away.
He somehow whiled the day away.





He waited impatiently for dusk to descend.

The king took out his swift horse.

He took out his swift horse.

He tightened the stirrups on the horse.

The king mounted the horse in one quick jerk.

He mounted the horse in one quick jerk.

Vasang spurred the horse by cracking his long whip.

The king trotted away on his horse.

He trotted away on his horse.

His seven queens watched him going away.

Dhofa heard the thudding sound.

She heard the thudding sound.

To see Arjhan she ran to her bed chamber.

The queen helped him get on his feet.

She helped him get on his feet.

She led him to the high couch.

‘Listen to what I say, O king,’ said Dhofa.

‘Listen to what I say.

Vasang has embittered our lives.’

The queen heated water in a golden vessel.

She heated water in a golden vessel.

She helped Arjhan to have a bath.

The queen prepared thirty-two kinds of delicacies.

She prepared thirty-two kinds of delicacies.

She fed Arjhan with her hands.

As the day came to a close,





As the day came to a close,
The ruler of the netherworld returned.

Hurriedly, he climbed the steps of the cloud-capped palace.
Hurriedly, he climbed the steps of the cloud-capped palace.
Impatient was he to see the woman with the golden hair.

Vasang greeted the queen.
He greeted the queen.
He led her to the high couch.

The queen heated water for him.
She heated water for him.
The queen of Arjhan heated water for him.

While Vasang was having his bath,
While Vasang was having his bath,
The queen forced tears into her eyes.

The ruler of the netherworld said to her,
The ruler of the netherworld said to her,
'Listen to what I say, O queen.'

'Why do you look so sullen and distressed?
Why do you look so sullen and distressed?
Who has caused you grief?'

The queen of Arjhan shed more tears.
She shed more tears.
'Listen to what I say, O king.'

'I'll tell you about my heart's desire, O king.
I'll tell you about my heart's desire.
I am enamoured by you.'





'I cannot live without you, O king.
I cannot live without you.
You are the king of my heart.'

'The luxuries of this palace of clouds, O king,
The luxuries of this palace of clouds,
Allure me no more.'

'Lend me your ear, O king.
Lend me your ear.
I'll tell you about my heart's desire.'

'The Pandavs are plotting to kill you, O king.
They are plotting to kill you.
What shall be my plight if you become their victim?'

'The Pandavs are after your life, O king.
They are after your life.
I'm crying for fear of your safety.'

'You'd better not cry, O queen,' said Vasang.
'You'd better not cry.
Stop crying and listen to what I say.'

'Banish your fears and come to bed with me.
Banish your fears and come to bed with me.
And prepare thirty-two kinds of savouries.'

Dhafa cooked various dishes for Vasang.
She cooked various dishes for Vasang.
On a golden salver she served the delicacies to him.

Dhafa took the salver to her bedchamber.
She took the salver to her bedchamber.





Reclining on the couch Vasang ate from Dhofa's hand.

Then he made Dhofa sit by him.

He made Dhofa sit by him.

And started to talk about sweet and bitter tidings.

'Listen to what I say, O king,' said Dhofa again.

'Listen to what I say.

I'll tell you about my heart's desire.'

'Promise me that everyday you'll come to my palace, O king.

Promise me that everyday you'll come to my palace.

You've ensnared me.'

You cannot fathom a woman's heart, O brother.

You cannot fathom a woman's heart.

She'll take your head in her lap and slash it herself!

Dhofa cooed a thousand sweet words into Vasang's ears.

She cooed a thousand sweet words into his ears.

She ensnared the king by her sweet talk.

Meanwhile, Arjhan returned from court.

He returned from court.

Hastily, he climbed the steps of his cloud-capped palace.

Arjhan pounced on Vasang.

He pounced on Vasang.

Both were engaged in a duel.

Vasang held Arjhan by his hand.

He held Arjhan by his hand.

He sat on Arjhan's chest.

Vasang snapped loose a strand of his moustache.





He snapped loose a strand of his moustache.
He tied Arjhan's legs and hands.

Vasang hung the moustache-strand by the peg.
He hung the moustache-strand by the peg.
A helpless Arjhan dangled from the dowel.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

When two mighty bulls lock horns in a fight, many a small plant and tree get trampled. The palace was bustling. *O maharaj!* The ruler of the netherworld pinned Arjhan to the ground. He got on to Arjhan's chest. *(Tambur)* The king of paataal snapped loose a strand from his moustache. He tied Arjhan's legs and arms with it. He hung Arjhan from a peg in the royal bedchamber. Arjhan dangled from the peg. *O maharaj!* The ruler of the netherworld said to Dhofa, 'O queen, make haste. Unfold a silk mattress on the bed. Spread fragrant flowers over it. Dab the mattress with musk.' *O maharaj!* The queen of Arjhan and Vasang of paataal sat on the bed. They played a game of chopat. Vasang spent the night with Dhofa. The waking cock's crowing heralded the day. The first streaks of light brightened the sky. Vasang sprang from the bed. He pulled out his radiant dagger. *O maharaj!* Arjhan was dangling from the peg. Vasang cut the strand with a stroke of his dagger. With a thud Arjhan fell. The ruler of the netherworld turned to Dhofa and said, 'Spend your day eating, drinking and merry-making. I'll be back at sunset.' The queen bade him goodbye. Vasang descended the steps of the cloud-capped palace. He returned to the netherworld. *O maharaj!* Dhofa ran to her bedchamber. She helped Arjhan to the bed. She comforted him in many ways. May you be well, *O honkaria*.²⁸ Life is short but the tale never ends.²⁹

(Tambur) O maharaj! Arjhan and his queen sat on the high couch. Arjhan spoke slowly, 'O queen, one can endure any kind of ordeal





for a few days. But this seems to be an endless trial. Every day Vasang ties my hands and legs and hangs me from a peg. And he enjoys you before me. How can I stand it? How can one bear such humiliation?' O *maharaj*! Thus Arjhan and his wife talked about their bitter tiding. Arjhan said to his wife, 'Try to prise out his secret. Try to find out where his strength lies. How can this mighty king be killed?' Thus spoke Arjhan to his queen. 'O queen, tonight when he comes, make him divulge the secret of his strength.' *Khama*.³⁰

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The queen fussed over the ruler of the netherworld. She won his confidence. She told him that she was worried about his safety. O *maharaj*! Vasang confided in her. He disclosed his secret to the queen. 'I am not afraid of any of the Pandav princes. They are not my match. Only one person from the Kaurav camp can pose a threat to me. Karan alone can beat me in a duel.' As the king of paataal left, Dhofa ran to Arjhan to share the secret.

'Now we know how to defeat him. But we are not on good terms with the Kauravs. They are our cousins. They are the sons of my father's brother, but we have quarrelled with them.' O *maharaj*! Arjhan pondered for a while. He said to Dhofa, 'When strangers are nice to you and your kin and kith say bitter things to you, they do so in your own interest. Blood is thicker than water. Karan will not decline our request. But how do we approach him for such a favour?' *Khama*. (*Tambur*) 'Tell me O queen, what do I tell Karan? Should I say that Vasang enjoys my wife in front of me? And so I seek his aid?' O *maharaj*! The king and his queen talked about their bitter fate. Dhofa said to the Pandav, 'Put all shame behind you. If you want to end this ordeal, you need to open your heart to someone. After all he is your kin.' Arjhan pondered for a while, 'Karan will come to the royal assembly in a short while. At that time I'll ask him for this favour.'

O *maharaj*! Arjhan saw Karan coming his way. He sat down with a *datan* to clean his teeth. Karan bowed to him as he passed by. He





greeted Arjhan with a warm smile. Arjhan raised his foot to reciprocate. O *maharaj*! Karan, the Pandav, was shaken to the core. He pondered for a while, 'Arjhan has done ill in the world. He did not return my courtesy. He raised his foot instead. Now I'll show him my strength. I'll work some wonder. I'll burn down the city of Asanapari.'

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! A furious Karan said to Arjhan, 'Why did you not return my courtesy? You have insulted me.' Arjhan replied, 'We do not know who your father is and whose son you are. You spoiled my day by being here at this early hour. Who would return the courtesy of a person such as you?' *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Arjhan raised his feet to greet Karan! Karan, the Pandav, was enraged. Unaccountable fury surged through him. 'What should I do? If the earth gives way, I would like to be engulfed rather than be humiliated like this,' thought he, 'Who is my father? Who'd know the answer better than my mother?' Tears rolled down Karan's cheeks. O *maharaj*! He became impatient to know the truth.

An infuriated Karan turned back on his heels.

An infuriated Karan turned back on his heels.

He wound his way back to his kingdom.

Karan returned to his home.

He returned to his home.

Karan arrived at the house of the mali.

Karan spoke to his mother.

He spoke to his mother.

'Listen to what I say, O mother.'

(An accompanist: He wants an answer from his mother! The lead singer: Yes it is so.)³¹





'Why are you so agitated, O son?' asked his mother.

'Why are you so agitated?

Has someone insulted or slighted you?'

'Tell me, whose son I am, O mother,' said Karan.

'Whose son am I?

Tell me who my parents are!'

'You are our offspring, O Karan.

You are our offspring.

Dublo, the mali, is your father,' said she.

'No, tell me the truth, O mother.

Tell me the truth.

Do not conceal the truth from me,' said Karan.

'We found you in a ditch, O son.

We found you in a ditch.

While shifting the dung we saw you lying in a pit.'

(An accompanist: We found you on a dunghill. The lead singer:
Yes, it is so.)

'We were loading manure, O son,' said the malan.

'We were loading the manure.

As we removed a stone we saw you lying underneath.'

Karan pondered for a while.

He pondered for a while.

'I cannot believe my ears.'

'Kutma, the queen mother, can answer your question.

She can answer your question.

Go to her and ask her to answer your question.'





‘People of Dhavlo Gadh say that you are her son.
 People of Dhavlo Gadh say that you are her son.
 You’ll get an answer from her.’

O maharaj!

The malan said to Karan, ‘We have nurtured you but you are not our flesh and blood. Go to Kutma, the queen mother. People say she gave you birth.’ *O maharaj!* Karan was perturbed. He beat his chest and twirled his moustache. He set off for the city of Asanapari. O, how he hurried towards Asanapari!

(*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* Karan arrived in Asanapari. He took the way to Kutma’s palace. He climbed the stairs with hasty steps. *O maharaj!* Kutma was swinging on her *hindola*. Karan went straight to her. He bowed down with reverence. (*Tambur*) He said to the queen mother, ‘O mother, tell me, how many children have you?’ Kutma said, ‘I bore five sons, the whole world knows I have five sons.’ Karan replied, ‘No mother, speak the truth, was I born to you?’ *Khama! Khama!*

(*Tambur*) Kutma pondered for a while, ‘Why has he come here? Who must have sent him to me?’ Karan was short of patience. He brandished a whip, ‘Do tell me, mother, am I your son?’ Kutma replied, ‘Yes, you were born to me. I left you in a ditch, O son. The mali found you while collecting manure.’ ‘You abandoned me,’ said Karan, ‘You left me to die. But I survived all odds and grew up in a gardener’s house. Tell me the name of my father. Who sired me?’ *O maharaj!* The mother and son got into a row. The palace was in commotion. May you be well, *O honkaria!* Life is short but the tale never ends.

‘Listen to what I say, O mother,’ said Karan.
 ‘Listen to what I say.





Tell me the truth, mother. I want a straight answer.'

'Whose son am I, O mother?

Whose son am I?

Tell me the name of my father.'

Kutma pondered for a while.

She pondered for a while.

'Listen to what I say, O son.'

'You are the son of Pandu, the king.

You are the son of Pandu, the king.

You were born to Pandu and me.'

'Don't lie to me, O mother,' said the son of the mali.

'Don't lie to me.

Tell me the truth about my lineage.'

'If you conceal the truth from me, O mother,

If you conceal the truth from me,

I'll push you out of this window.'

'I'll fling you to the ground, O mother.

I'll fling you to the ground.

Tell me the name of my father.'

'Why are you so keen to unearth the truth?' asked Kutma.

'Why are you so keen to unearth the truth?

Why do you want to know the name of your male parent?'

'I long for a father's affection, O mother,' said Karan.

'I long for a father's affection.

In his lap I want to lay my head.'





'You are the son of the father of all,' said Kutma.

'You are the son of the father of all.

You are the son of God himself.'

(An accompanist: He is an offspring of the Sun! The lead singer:
Yes it is so.)

'You are the son of the Sun God, O Karan,

None else but the Sun is your sire.' *Ho...ji...*³²

'I'll ask for a legacy from him, O mother,' said Karan.

'I'll ask for his weaponry.' *Ho...ji...*

(*Tambur*) *O maharaj!*

Kutma said to Karan, 'Don't get upset. The great God is your father. Go and ask for your legacy. He'll give you his fierce weapons.' 'What you say is true, O mother,' said Karan, 'But how shall I go to him? How will he recognize me? He must have given you something as a mark of his love.' Kutma gave her son the cloak of fire and a ball of wax. *O maharaj!* Kutma gave Karan signs of his Sun father. She said to him, 'Go to the eastern land. Fling this cloak of fire on the rising Sun. He won't be able to rise. Prevent him from rising and he'll speak to you.'

(*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* Thus the mother instructed her son. Karan set off for a distant eastern land. He walked with long strides and short steps. Hurriedly, he tore along the way. Little puffs of sand arose as he walked. He took the way to Bengal. *O maharaj!* He started for the land of Bengal. He arrived at the eastern most end of the land. He stood at the seashore. The waking cock's crowing heralded the day. The first streak of light brightened the sky. *O maharaj!* The Sun emerged from the surface of the sea. Karan cast the shroud on the crest of the rising Sun.





*Jeevta!*¹³³ *Bhalai!*¹³⁴

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Karan flung the shroud of fire on the rising Sun. The Sun could not emerge from the water. The Sun pondered for a while, 'Who dares to stop me?' O *maharaj!* However hard the Sun God tried, he could not escape from beneath the shroud. He mused again, 'Ill will happen in the world if I cannot let myself loose. Who is this mortal being to challenge me?' O *maharaj!* The Sun God spoke aloud, 'Who stands there to stop me from rising? Who are you? Aren't you aware that if I do not rise heaven will be set afire? If I do not rise millions of lives on earth will die. Speak, why do you prevent me from rising? Tell me what wish of yours remains unfulfilled?'

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Thus spoke the Sun God. Karan took a step forward and said, 'O father, it is your heir who dares prevent your rise. I have come to see the face of my parent. I want to talk to my father.' A surprised God said, 'Who has the nerve to call me parent? Take away this shroud and let me see your face. I have never fathered any child.'

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Karan said, 'I won't let you out. Neither today, nor tomorrow. Give me your word that you'll answer my queries. Promise that you'll talk to me. Only then will I untie you. Otherwise this Dhavlo Gadh will forever remain shrouded in darkness.' The Sun God said, 'O enemy of daylight, how do I believe that you are my offspring? Unveil me and let me course up the sky. I'll unleash thousands of my scorching rays. If you come out unscratched, I'll believe that you are my son. Only my own blood and flesh can withstand my beams.'

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Karan pulled back the shroud of fire. He set free the God of light. The Sun glided up in the eastern sky. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* The Sun unleashed his thousand scorching rays on Karan.





He afflicted Karan with heated beams. O *maharaj*! Karan stood unharmed. The rays could not burn him. Heat could not turn him into a heap of ash. The Sun God pondered for a while, 'O, he is my seed indeed.' He said aloud, 'O son, come closer, come into my embrace.' (*Tambur*) After many years father and son were united. They talked about their sweet and bitter times. O *maharaj*! The Sun God said, 'O son, what has brought you here today? What ails you?' *Khama! Khama!* (*Tambur*) Father and son conversed. O *maharaj*! The Sun God said to Karan, 'Why have you travelled such a long distance to meet me? Who has slighted or slurred you?' Karan said, 'O father, Arjhan, the Pandav, derided me. He called me a man of obscure lineage. He asked me to name my father!' (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Karan opened his heart to his father, 'Give me your infallible weapons. I want to prove my mettle.' The Sun God said, 'O Karan, do not lose your patience, my son. I'll give you my unfailing arms. But beware, they are potent. Don't waste their power in haste.' *Khama.*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The Sun God gave Karan his potent dagger and said, 'Keep this dagger concealed in a ball of wax. Don't take it out without a valid reason or the surface of mother earth will split. And millions of stars will be set on fire. The Gods of heaven and the netherworld will die. It will set forests and water ablaze.' The Sun God said, 'And listen, my son, don't pay much heed to slander. Don't become arrogant. This dagger of mine has limitless power, but think twice before wielding it.' (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Karan took the dagger from his father. He turned to go to Asanapari. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

Karan set off with his father's potent weapon.

He set off with his father's potent weapon.

With the Sun God's dagger he turned to go.

With long strides and short steps,





With long strides and short steps,
Karan started for Asanapari.

Dhofa pondered for a while.
She pondered for a while.
'Karan had gone to get his father's weapon.'

'He is coming back in great haste.
He is coming back in great haste.
I can see him coming this way.'

Karan halted at the outskirts.
He halted at the outskirts.
He waited for Arjhan at the outskirts.

Karan waited for the mighty Pandav prince.
He waited for the mighty Pandav prince.
He strained his eyes to look for his enemy.

Dhofa went to placate him.
She went to placate him.
'O Karan, don't become so agitated.'

'I'll show you my mettle today, O queen.
I'll show you my mettle today.
Asanapari will be engulfed in fire.'

'Out of his agonies Arjhan taunted you.
Out of his agonies Arjhan taunted you.
We are burning alive, O Karan,' said Dhofa.

'Listen to the tale of our woe, O Karan.
Listen to the tale of our woe.
We are in dire straits.'





‘Confront our tormentor in ambush.
Confront our tormentor in ambush.
To prove your mettle, vanquish this enemy of ours.’

‘We are living a life of hell, O Karan.
We are living a life of hell.
Rescue us from distress.’

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Karan arrived in Asanapari. He came with his father’s potent weapon. Dhofa saw him coming. She pondered for a while, ‘Karan has returned with his father’s weapon. Arjhan has slighted him. He is upset and agitated. He is sure to destroy Asanapari.’

O maharaj! Dhofa went to the outskirts to receive Karan. She blocked the way of the Sun God’s son. *Khama*. O maharaj! Dhofa set off to meet Karan outside the town. She tried to placate him, ‘We are in a difficult situation. We live as if in hell. We get more emaciated day by day.’ Karan was in foul temper. He thought of killing Arjhan. He wanted to destroy the city of Asanapari. But Dhofa blocked his way. She narrated her tale of woe. She diverted his attention, ‘O Karan, should I sing in praise of your hand or should I talk about your valour? I’ll show you our tormentor. I’ll call you praiseworthy if you can defeat him in ambush.’ *Khama*.

O maharaj! ‘Tell me the name of your adversary. Who perturbed Arjhan to aim banter at me?’ said Karan. ‘Don’t get impatient, O Karan, oh mighty one! As the Sun sinks behind the western hills, the king of the netherworld will come riding upon this earth. He’ll tie his horse in the glistening green garden and come to my palace. He’ll force me into his service and hang your cousin from a peg. He ties Arjhan’s hands and legs and hangs him from a peg. He enjoys me all through the night and leaves as the Sun comes up. He has





rendered us helpless. Every day, we are becoming scrawny and skinny. I'll praise your worthy hands when they'll curl around my tormentor's neck. You are my saviour,' lamented Arjhan's consort. O *maharaj*! Karan listened to her tale of woe. He pondered for a while. He assured Dhofa that he would help her out of her distress. He returned to his palace. Dhofa ascended the steps of her palace of clouds. O *maharaj*! At the appointed time the tormentor of the Pandav prince entered the palace.

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Karan waited for the ruler of the netherworld. As the day wore on, Vasang mounted his horse. The world was bustling about. He arrived at the glistening green garden. He tethered his horse to the branch of a tree. Swishing his stick, he took the way to the palace of the Pandav prince. Leisurely, he strolled on the familiar path. Holding his head high, he entered the palace. The queen received him with a false smile. O *maharaj*! She led him to the high couch. As usual, she heated water for him. She served him a meal on a golden salver. O *maharaj*! Vasang drew her close to him. Arjhan, hanging from the peg, was watching. Arjhan helplessly watched his adversary. Vasang played the game of chopat with the queen. As day broke, the ruler of the netherworld rose from the couch. Dhofa said with concern, 'O king, I am so fond of you, I can't live without you! You are matchless among your peers.' Thus Dhofa showered affection on Vasang. 'Leave to attend to your daily court affairs, but return to me as soon as night closes in,' said she. 'Don't worry, my queen, none on the face of the earth can stop me from coming to you. We'll eat, drink and enjoy ourselves.'

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Thus spoke the king of paatal and descended the stairs of the cloud-capped palace. Hastily, he went to the glistening green garden. But someone else had arrived there before him. To confront him, to ambush him! *Khama! Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! His enemy was waiting for Vasang in the





glistening green garden. The queen had showered him with affection but she had also contrived for his adversary to take him on in the garden. O Lord, who can fathom the depth of a woman's heart? On the one hand she fussed over the king, on the other she schemed to get him killed! She'll take your head in her lap and slash it herself, no doubt. O *maharaj*! But the king of paataal was not aware of this facet of a woman's nature. Happy and content, he went to the glistening green garden. Karan had arrived there before him. He was waiting for the ruler of the netherworld.

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Karan sneaked into the glistening green garden. He caught sight of Vasang's horse. He drew out his dagger from the waxen ball. He pointed the potent weapon at the horse. The horse turned into a heap of ash. Then Karan hid under the shade of a champa tree. He waited for Vasang. O *maharaj*! Karan saw Vasang coming his way. Vasang walked with a skip in his step. Karan pounced on the serpent king. He brandished his dagger at him. The nine-hooded serpent king fell to the ground. Karan started burning his hoods. He burnt eight of Vasang's nine hoods. The ruler of the netherworld was in great pain. He writhed on his sides. O *maharaj*! Vasang begged for his life. Karan took pity on him. He let go of the serpent king, now left with only one hood.

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DHOFA AND BHEMJHAL

O maharaj!

The five Pandav brothers, the sons of Pandu, saw Dhofa in the deep forest. They brought her to their palace. The Pandavs conversed among themselves, 'O brothers, had one of us found her, he would have wedded her. But we were all together when she came our way. She belongs to all of us.' They built a seven storied palace for her. The Pandav brothers went to her in turns. Four brothers became enamoured by her. First Dhofa charmed Arjhan, then Bhemo got besotted. Sadev and Nakro were next to be smitten by her. But the eldest Pandav brother was not yet smitten by her. *O maharaj!* When Jethodar went to bed with her, Dhofa took the form of a one-year old infant. Jethodar took her in his lap. He pressed her against his chest. Soon Dhofa was transformed into a youthful woman. Jethodar too changed his form. He became a one-year old. Jethodar could not sleep a wink. He pondered for a while, 'How she changes forms! I cannot trust her. She could devour me.' He spent the night tossing and turning.

O maharaj! As the waking cock's crowing heralded the day, the eldest Pandav sprang from his bed. He cleaned his teeth with a datan of the kaniyor tree. He paid his respects to the rising Sun. He chanted the names of various Gods and his parents and returning to his





bedchamber, offered gugal to the Gods. He blew a conch. Then he performed aarti of Dhofa.

O *maharaj*! One fine day something happened which turned out to be very auspicious. Holding an earthen pitcher in his hand, Bhemo started off for the outskirts to answer the call of nature. He pondered for a while, 'Our eldest brother never comes out of the palace. I am worried about his well-being. Why has he not even once emerged from Dhofa's palace?' O *maharaj*! Bhemo was anxious about Jethodar's safety. He climbed the stairs of the palace of clouds. He peeped in from the arched window. Dhofa was fast asleep on the high couch.

The eldest Pandav brother was gently fanning his queen.
He was fanning her gently.
He was fanning her with a golden fan.

Standing at the bedstead, the king fanned his queen.
Standing at the bedstead, the king fanned his queen.
He was fanning his wife.

Bhemo was livid with anger.
Bhemo was livid with anger.
From toe to crest he trembled with rage.

'Has my brother gone crazy?' thought he.
'Has my brother gone crazy?
His behaviour is peculiar.'

But Bhemo did not know,
But he did not know,
That his brother's piety was being tested.

An enraged Bhemo went to Kutma's palace.





An enraged Bhemo went to Kutma's palace.

'Listen to what I say, O mother,' said he.

'Our eldest brother has darkened our family name, O mother.

Our elder brother has darkened our family name.

Our cousins will mock us.'

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Bhemo peeped in from the arched window. He could not believe what he saw. The palace was in a flurry of activity. The eldest Pandav blew a conch-shell. He performed the aarti. *O maharaj!* A newly-wedded groom bowed to his bride. *Khama. Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Jethodar offered his queen gugal incense. Bhemo was watching from the window. He pondered for a while, 'He went to her palace only two days ago. And today he bows to her. Why is she so dear to his heart? Why is he stooping so low? Oh! He has darkened our parents' reputation. He has brought shame to the throne of Asanapari. Ill has been done in the world.' *Khama! Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Bhemo was perturbed. 'Now who will pay us respect? The Pandavs were the first living Gods who walked on the surface of this earth,' thought Bhemo. He was livid with anger. From the tip of his toe to his head, he trembled with anger. *O maharaj!* Throwing down the pitcher, Bhemo hastily walked towards an old tunnel. He sat in the darkest corner of the ruined tunnel. He pondered for a while, 'True, her beauty is unrivalled. But should one stoop so low? Should I kill one of them? I feel like ending my life! My elder brother's behaviour is unusual.' *Khama! Khama!* May you be well, *O honkaria!* Life is short but the tale never ends.

Bhemo pondered for a while.

He pondered for a while.





He could not believe his eyes.

Dhofa cooked thirty-two kinds of delicacies.

She cooked thirty-two kinds of delicacies.

She called Bhemo for his meal.

But Bhemo was nowhere to be seen.

He was nowhere to be seen.

She moved about the palace looking for him.

Dhofa went to the royal court.

She went to the royal court.

But she could not find Bhemo.

Dhofa searched for him inside the ruins of the tunnel.

She searched for him inside the ruins of the tunnel.

She peeped inside the tunnel.

She caught sight of Bhemjhal, the Pandav prince.

She caught sight of Bhemjhal, the Pandav prince.

Dhofa saw Bhemo lying on his belly.

The *bhabhi* spoke to her dear *devar*.

She spoke to her dear *devar*.

‘Listen to what I say, O *devar*.’

‘Who has beaten and battered you, O *devar*?

Who has beaten and battered you.

Why are you so remorseful?’ asked she.

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*!

The *bhabhi* spoke to her *devar*, ‘Why do you look so sullen and remorseful?’ Bhemo did not reply. He fretted for a while. O *maharaj*!





Dhofa tried to calm him. 'What ails my devar that he refuses to eat? All your four brothers relished their meal. But you are squirming here in hunger. Come with me to my palace of clouds, O devar. I'll feed you with my own hands.' O *maharaj*! Dhofa spoke to Bhemo affectionately. Her words melted his anger. She led him to her cloud-capped palace. Bhemo washed his hands and sat down to eat. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Dhofa watched him eat. Bhemo, who usually consumed hundred and ten seers of food, could eat only one *rotla* that day. Bhemo, who used to drink twelve pitchers of water after a meal, had only one glass of water that day. His heart was not in the food. He was still burning with shame. May you be well, O *honkaria*! Life is short but the tale never ends.

Bhabhi and her devar sat conversing.

They sat conversing.

'Listen to what I say, O bhabhi,' said Bhemo.

'Every day I eat hundred and ten seers of food.

Every day I eat hundred and ten seers of food.

But today I could hardly eat a *rotla*.'

'Can you guess why I have lost my appetite?' asked he.

'Can you guess why I have lost my appetite?'

'Lend me your ear, O devar,' said Dhofa.

'Don't fuss over petty things, O devar,' said she.

'Don't fuss over petty things.

Such things breed bitter feelings.'

But Bhemo would not give in.

He did not give in.

He insisted on knowing the truth.





‘Listen to what I say, O devar,’ said his bhabhi.

‘Listen to what I say.

Listen carefully to what I say.’

‘Come to the banyan tree called Parag Vad tonight.

Come to the banyan tree called Parag Vad tonight.

You’ll get the answer to your question.’

Bhalai! Jeevta!

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Dhofa said to her devar, ‘Come to the banyan tree known as Parag Vad at the outskirts when the Sun declines behind the western hills. Come there when the night closes in. Climb up the banyan tree and sit there hiding. You’ll get answers to all your doubts.’ O *maharaj!* Bhemo pondered for a while, ‘How slowly the time ticks away, today. I’ll wait for twilight.’ As the Sun dipped Bhemo went to the outskirts of Asanapari. He climbed up the tree and sat hiding.’

Bhemo climbed up the tree and sat hiding.

Bhemo climbed up the tree and sat hiding.

He perched on the branch of the banyan tree.

At around midnight Gods thronged the outskirts.

At around midnight Gods thronged the outskirts.

One after the other they came to the Parag Vad.

At midnight the Wind God arrived.

At midnight the Wind God arrived.

He swept clear the ground.

(An accompanist: He watches with wide eyes! The lead singer:
Yes, it is so.)





Indar came there after a while.
Indar came there after a while.
He daubed the ground with mud paste.

Thrones of gold and silver appeared.
Thrones of gold and silver appeared.
The thrones were laid under the banyan tree.

Heaven was in a flurry of activity.
It was in a flurry of activity.
Heaven was bustling with activity.

A gust of wind arose from heaven.
A gust of wind arose from heaven.
The wind enveloped the banyan tree.

Along with the eastern wind,
Along with the eastern wind,
Descended thousands of Gods and Goddesses.

The ruler of Vaikunthpuri also arrived.
The ruler of Vaikunthpuri also arrived.
On the silver throne he sat.

The nine lakh deities bowed to him.
The nine lakh deities bowed to him.
They paid their respect to the Almighty.

From Asanapari came Dhofa.
From Asanapari came Dhofa.
Riding on a tiger's back she came.

She held a lamp in one hand.
She held a lamp in one hand.





In another she held a dagger.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Bhemo, the Pandav, pondered for a while. ‘This is a spectacle of my life. A divine court is being held under the tree. What will be my plight?’ *O maharaj!* Bhemo was breathless. He trembled like withered leaves. Terror-stricken, he became feverish. The banyan tree shook as he trembled. *O maharaj!* The Gods conversed among themselves, ‘Why have the Goddesses not come yet? Why do they delay?’ Bhemo beheld his mother coming. Riding on a male buffalo she came. She dismounted and sat on the golden throne. Suddenly, there was a growling. Dhofa arrived riding a tiger. Like a pedigree horse, the tiger obeyed her commands. Dismounting from the tiger, she took her place on a golden throne. *Khama!*

As Dhofa arrived at the gathering,
As she arrived at the gathering,
Bhagvan stood up to pay her respect.

On the golden throne sat Dhofa.
On the golden throne sat Dhofa.
She took her seat on the golden throne.

Bhemo trembled like withered leaves.
He trembled like withered leaves.
Terror-stricken he became feverish.

Lord asked Dhofa,
He asked Dhofa,
‘Could you ensnare the Pandav brothers?’

‘Four of the Pandavs are under my sway.





Four of the Pandavs are under my sway.
But the eldest one is hard to win,' said Dhofa.

'Jethodar worships me day and night.
He worships me day and night.
But he has not come under my control yet.'

'Once he is caught in my snare.
Once he is caught in my snare.
I'll kill them all and come to Vaikunthpuri.'

Thus conversed the Lord and Dhofa.
Thus conversed the Lord and Dhofa.
The Lord then returned to Vaikunthpuri.

Bhemo scrambled down the banyan tree.
He scrambled down the banyan tree.
'Lend me your ear, O mother,' said he.

'Let's take the way to Asanapari.
Let's take the way to Asanapari.
We are in deep trouble.'

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Bhemo was dumbstruck. He had witnessed a spectacle. He said to his mother, 'Let's leave this weird place. Bhabhi's behaviour is dubious.' 'I had told you not to poke your nose into her affairs. But you did not listen to me. Now that you are aware of her powers, the lives of your brothers are in your hand. Tomorrow at midnight, go stand at the crossroad and weep aloud. That's the only way to get out of this tangle,' said Kutma.

(Tambur) O maharaj! Bhemo was so scared that the next night he





went and stood at the marketplace. He started wailing and weeping aloud. Dhofa heard him and came down. Bhemo was crying inconsolably. The people of Asanapari gathered in the street. They tried to calm their prince. Dhofa said, 'What's the matter? Why do you weep so? I heard you crying and raced down the stairs of my cloud-capped palace.' 'Give me your word, then alone I'll speak,' said Bhemo. Dhofa assured him of her help. 'Bless us by placing your palm on our heads and help us to tread on the path of virtue,' said Bhemo. 'Let us go to the palace of the clouds and talk about these matters,' said Dhofa.

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! 'Give me your word,' said Bhemo, 'Bless us, we the five siblings.' The Pandav princes gathered in the palace of clouds. Bhemo said to Kutma, the queen mother. He said remorsefully, 'O mother, you and our bhabhi are witches. You ally with Gods and Goddesses. Why didn't you take us to such an august gathering?' O *maharaj*! Dhofa said to Bhemo, 'You do not deserve a place in such gatherings. You are blinded by conceit. You cannot distinguish right from wrong. You haven't tread upon the path of virtue. But don't despair. Listen carefully to what I say and I'll impart a few words of wisdom. Follow my advice conscientiously. The Gods will invite you to their divine gatherings. The Lord of Heaven will come down to your dwelling. But if you dither, you will be doomed.'

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BHAKTI

‘Listen to what I say, O sons!
Listen to what I say.
Lend me your ear,’ said Kutma.

‘Pay heed to my words, O sons.
Pay heed to my words.
Don’t invite your nemesis.’

‘Don’t slur or slight anyone, O sons.
Don’t slur or slight anyone.
Don’t belittle your opponents.’

‘Deride you must not your kith and kin, O sons.
Deride you must not your kith and kin.
Elders should be spoken to respectfully.’

‘Don’t insult your peers and cousins, O sons.
Don’t insult your peers and cousins.
Meet your acquaintances with courtesy.’

‘Never speak a lie, O sons.
Never speak a lie.
Telling lies makes us small in others’ eyes.’





‘Upright and conscientious you must be, O sons.
Upright and conscientious you must be.
Leave not the path of *bhakti*.’

‘Through *bhakti* one attains emancipation, O sons.
Through *bhakti* one attains emancipation.
Pluck on your tambur and sing *bhajans*.’

‘Surrender yourselves to *bhakti*, O sons.
Surrender yourselves to *bhakti*.
Lord Almighty and the sages will grace our palace.’

(Tambur) O maharaj!

The Pandavs asked their mother, ‘Guide us, O mother. How can we become virtuous?’ ‘O sons, embrace the path of *bhakti*. Sing *bhajans* to the accompaniment of cymbals. Pluck on your tambur.’ *O maharaj!* The sages and ascetics will be drawn to our palace. We’ll sing *bhajans* with them. And God will be our guest. He’ll grace our palace. We will be emancipated. O sons, listen carefully to what I say. Don’t neglect the path of *bhakti*, make your names immortal in the world.’

(Tambur) O maharaj! Thus spoke Kutma and her five sons listened to her intently. The Pandavs said, ‘But mother, we don’t know how to pluck on a tambur. Never in our lives have we sung the eulogies of God. Show us how to clink cymbals. You must teach us *bhajans*. *O maharaj!* ‘Only virtuous people can embrace *bhakti*, my sons,’ said Kutma. ‘Only brave hearts can practice *bhakti*. It is like walking on a dagger’s edge; falter a step, and you’ll get pierced. Think twice before you decide, O sons. If you’re really determined to practice *bhakti*, only then will I teach you its ways.’ *Khama!*

‘Listen to what I say, O sons,’ said Kutma.
‘Listen to what I say.’





Lend me your ear, my sons.'

'Think twice before embracing bhakti, O sons.

Think twice before embracing bhakti.

It is like walking on a dagger's edge.'

'Only bhakti can save you, O sons.

Only bhakti can save you.

Tread on the path of bhakti.'

Sadev, the Pandav prince, said to his mother,

Sadev, the Pandav prince, said to his mother,

'Lead us on to the right path.'

'Tell us how to embrace bhakti, O mother.

Tell us how to embrace bhakti.

O mother, how do we tread on the path of bhakti?'

'Take tamburs and pairs of cymbals, O sons.

Take tamburs and pairs of cymbals.

Bring some musical instruments,' said Kutma.

'Fetch conch shells and some bells, O sons.

Fetch conch shells and some bells.

O Pandav princes, fetch some conches and bells.'

'Invite five virgin girls, O sons.

Invite five virgin girls.

Request five virgin girls to come to your palace.'

(Tambur) O maharaj!

On a very auspicious day, a narrator narrates the story and the entire court listens to him intently. The event occurred during satyug but is narrated in the time of kaliyug. This is a tale of the exploits of brave





and righteous people. Let us narrate the story of the Pandav princes, a tale of valiant people. Though none of them is alive today, their tale has become eternal. *Khama! (Tambur)* The Pandavs were the first living Gods who walked on the surface of this earth. We sing in the praise of the Pandavs. *(Tambur)* O *maharaj!* By reciting this tale, we can lessen the burden of our wrong deeds. Kutma said to her sons, 'Let us go to paatal and invite Goddess Bhakti to our place.' O *maharaj!* The queen mother spoke and her sons listened to her. *Khama!*

They fetched conches and bells.
They fetched conches and bells.
Conches and bells they fetched.

Musical instruments were ordered.
Musical instruments were ordered.
They summoned five virgin girls.

The Pandavs set off to invite Bhakti, the Goddess.
The Pandavs set off to invite Bhakti, the Goddess.
With hasty steps they went along the way.

The Pandavs took the way to the netherworld.
They took the way to the netherworld.
Singing bhajans, they journeyed towards the netherworld.

Plucking on their tamburs they sang bhajans.
Plucking on their tamburs they sang bhajans.
As they walked they sang stirring bhajans.

The Pandavs worshipped their Gods.
They worshipped their Gods.
They performed aarti before leaving home.

The Pandavs went to the dhuni of the sages.





They went to the dhuni of the sages.
They went to the sages to pay their respect.

The Pandavs reached the dhuni of Sam Rishi.
They reached the dhuni of Sam Rishi.
At the dhuni of Sam Rishi they bowed their heads.

The Pandavs were welcomed with much fervour.
They were welcomed with much fervour.
The dhuni was full of activity.

The Pandavs performed aarti at the dhuni of Sam Rishi.
They performed aarti at the dhuni of Sam Rishi.
Sounds of *damru* and conches rented the air.

The Pandavs were off to invite Bhakti.
They were off to invite Bhakti.
They wanted to tread on the path of Bhakti.

The Pandavs offered gugal to the sacred fire.
They offered gugal to the sacred fire.
They performed aarti at the dhuni.

Sadev, the Pandav prince, sang bhajans.
He sang bhajans.
The Pandavs were engrossed in bhajans.

Khama! Khama!

(Tambur) O maharaj!

The Pandav brothers set out to invite Bhakti, the Goddess from the netherworld. They walked with hasty steps. They arrived at the dhuni of Dhum Rishi. The Pandavs and their mother bowed to the sage with reverence. *Khama! (Tambur) O maharaj!* People were bustling





about the dhuni. The Pandav princes offered gugal to the sacred fire. They offered prayers to their gurus. They respectfully called the names of their ancestors. They performed aarti and plucked on their tamburs. The Pandavs sang bhajans. They served the rishis in many ways to win their favour. They pressed the rishis' limbs. *Khama! Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! The Pandavs said, 'O rishis, we have set out to invite Goddess Bhakti to our kingdom. We'll escort her back to our kingdom with veneration.' They said, 'We, the five brothers, along with our mother and five virgin girls request you to grant us consent to take Bhakti with us. We promise to follow the path of virtue in Asanapari.' The sages sang bhajans in praise of Bhakti. They offered gugal to the sacred fire. They chanted the name of Goddess Bhakti. 'O Goddess of worship,' they said, 'One who wields a weapon rightfully, owns it. Those who worship God with devotion become one with him. The Pandavs are determined to exert their might in your service. Kindly accept their services and accompany them to their kingdom. And if ever they stray from the righteous path, return to your abode in the netherworld.' Thus the rishis requested Goddess Bhakti. (*Tambur*) O maharaj! Sadev, the Pandav, sang bhajan after bhajan. The netherworld was bustling. Bhakti, the Goddess, emerged from the netherworld. She was pleased with the Pandav princes. She came out to accompany them to their kingdom. The Pandavs started off for Asanapari. They walked back with Bhakti, the Goddess. Hurriedly, they walked along. *Khama!*

The Pandavs returned with Goddess Bhakti.

They returned with the Goddess Bhakti.

They halted at the outskirts of Asanapari.

Asanapari was bustling.

Asanapari was bustling.





There was a flurry of activity.

Sounds of drums and cymbals were heard.

Sounds of drums and cymbals were heard.

Drum beats resounded across the city.

People came flocking out to welcome their princes.

People came flocking out to welcome their princes.

The Pandavs were welcomed ceremoniously.

On decorated platters lamps were lit.

On decorated platters lamps were lit.

The Pandavs were welcomed with lighted lamps.

Customary songs were sung by the women.

Customary songs were sung by the women.

The women sang customary songs.

Fragrant flowers were scattered on their path.

Fragrant flowers were scattered on their path.

The people were in revelry.

The maidens led the Pandavs to the dhuni.

They led the Pandavs to the dhuni.

They arrived at the dhuni to celebrate.

The Pandavs plucked on their tamburs.

They plucked on their tamburs.

They sang bhajans in praise of Goddess Bhakti.

Kutma, the queen mother,

Kutma, the queen mother,

She spoke to her worthy sons.

‘Now that you have Bhakti on your side, O sons,





Now that you have Bhakti on your side,
Never leave the path of virtue.'

'You are worthy of praise, O sons,
You are worthy of praise.
You have brought glory to my name.'

The Pandavs brought glory to their mother.
They brought glory to their mother.
They made their names immortal.

'Lead a conscientious life, O sons,' said Kutma.
'Lead a conscientious life.
Live a life of prudence.'

'It's like walking on a dagger's edge, O sons.
It's like walking on a dagger's edge.
Be careful as you tread on the path of bhakti.'

Jeevta! Jeevta!

(Tambur) O maharaj!

The Pandavs were the sovereign of Asanapari. Court matters were being discussed in their royal assembly. After the court was over, the Pandavs went to the dhuni. To the accompaniment of tamburs and cymbals, the Pandav princes sang bhajans. Dhofa, their virtuous queen, fanned them gently. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Sadev, the Pandav prince, sang bhajans. The sound of bhajans resounded in the air. 'You have brought glory to me, O sons,' said Kutma, 'You've made your names immortal. You are the jewels of the land.' *(Tambur) O maharaj!* The Pandavs were like tigers on the prowl. Their bravery was matchless. They were the first living Gods to walk on the surface of this earth. Those who





cannot not appreciate such noble people should be condemned. When such Lords die, even the trees shed their leaves.³⁵

One fine day an incident took place,
One fine day an incident took place,
Which turned out to be very auspicious.

Bhemjhal, the Pandav, pondered for a while.
He pondered for a while.
He was engrossed in thoughts.

Bhemo held a pair of cymbals and a tambur.
He held a pair of cymbals and a tambur.
He came down his cloud-capped palace.

Bhemo took the way to an abandoned shrine.
He took the way to an abandoned shrine.
He wanted to learn to sing bhajans.

Bhemo practised bhajans.
He practised bhajans.
In a lonely shrine, he sang bhajans.

Bhemo sang bhajans aloud.
He sang bhajans aloud.
Plucking on his tambur, he practised bhajans.

The shrine reverberated with his singing.
It reverberated with his singing.
His voice resounded in the abandoned shrine.

A potter in the town,
A potter in the town,
A potter heard his voice and went to the shrine.





The potter peeped into the shrine.
 He peeped into the shrine.
 He knelt down to look.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Bhemo, the Pandav prince, pondered for a while, 'Why does only Sadev take the lead in singing and I have to repeat after him? Why can't I take the lead in singing bhajans? Can't I sing like him?' O *maharaj!* Thinking thus, Bhemo picked up his tambur. He took a pair of cymbals with him. *Khama!* *(Tambur)* He set off for an abandoned shrine. O *maharaj!* Bhemo left the town behind and went to a deserted shrine. Sitting inside the shrine, he practised singing bhajans. He plucked the tambur and sang bhajans. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Bhemo was engrossed in singing bhajans. In the meantime a potter belonging to the same town happened to pass by. He was looking for his lost donkey. He heard Bhemo sing in the abandoned shrine. He thought that his donkey was braying inside. Hastily, he walked towards the shrine. Bending, he peeped inside. He found the Pandav prince practising bhajans. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Bhemo, the Pandav prince, saw a potter kneeling at the door. He beckoned him in. He asked the potter to come in. He asked the potter why he had come to the lonely shrine. The potter said, 'I heard you sing bhajans and I came here to be in your presence.' Bhemo pondered for a while, 'He seems to be lying.' He turned to the potter and asked, 'I want to hear the truth, tell me why you are here?' The potter trembled like a dry leaf. 'Tell me the truth or I'll kill you here and now,' said Bhemo. *Khama!* The potter pondered for a while and said, 'O Lord, I was looking for my donkey and I heard a noise from inside the shrine. I mistook it for the braying of my ass. And I came here to take a closer look.'





(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Bhemo pondered for a while, ‘So that’s what people think of my singing skills. I am not destined to be a singer. Let my brother do that for us. I’ll do better to repeat after him. Even by accompanying him, I can join in the worship of the Gods.’ O *maharaj*! Bhemo picked up his *tambur* and the pair of cymbals. He returned to the *dhuni*.

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Bhasha





SANETARO YAGNA

(*Tambur*) O maharaj!

The Pandavs mourned their father's death for a quarter and one month. Then they performed a rite to mark the end of the mourning period.

Between birth and death several rites are performed. When a child is born, a *ghughri* is prepared and distributed among small children. It is called the first *yagna* of one's life. When the child grows up and his wedding is arranged, he is required to perform a rite. At that time too, the *ghughri* is prepared and distributed to people present for the wedding ceremony. This is called the second *yagna*. When a wedding *pandal* is erected and the groom enters it for the ceremony, the third *yagna* of life is considered to be conducted. Thus, when Pandu married Kutma, the third *yagna* of his life was accomplished. When the wedding was solemnized, the fourth *yagna* was done. After the death of Pandu the king, when his heirs had their heads shaved to mark the end of the mourning period, the fifth *yagna* was performed. The Pandavs performed the final rites for the salvation of their father's soul, which marked the sixth *yagna* of Pandu's journey on this earth.

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! The Pandavs conducted the final rites for their father a hundred times but still the soul of Pandu did not find peace.





In the abyss of hell, his soul felt tormented. Thousands of vermin were gobbling his body. The Pandavs were worried that their father's soul was not emancipated.

Pandu, the king, lay in agony.

He lay in agony.

He suffered afflictions in hell.

God spoke to him.

God spoke to him.

'Listen to what I say, O king.'

'Your karma decides your fate, O king.

Your karma decides your fate.

You are suffering on account of your past deeds.'

'I'll send you back to earth, O king.

I'll send you back to earth.

You'll be born a black dog.'

'In Asanapari you'll be born.

In Asanapari you'll be born.

In your next birth you'll be born a dog.'

'Take good care of your sons, O king.

Take good care of your sons.

In good and bad times be by their side.'

Pandu, the king, was born a black dog.

He was born a black dog.

He was reborn as a dog.

The dog wandered in the streets of Asanapari.

He wandered in the streets of Asanapari.





He roamed the lanes and alleyways of Asanapari.

The dog found his way to Sadev's palace.

He found his way to Sadev's palace.

He went to the palace of Sadev.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Pandu, the king, was reborn a black dog. He was born in a corner of a street in Asanapari. Wandering through the lanes and alleyways, he reached the doors of Sadev's palace. Sadev's queen saw him coming. With a heavy staff she beat him. The poor soul, how could she know that it was her father-in-law! Staff in hand, she chased the black dog away. The dog ran towards Nakro's palace. Nakro's queen was sitting at the grinding stone. She threw a log at the dog. The famished dog went to Bhemo's palace. Bhemo's queen cursed him for coming there, 'Why don't you perish? We don't have enough food in this palace. Bhemo alone devours the food cooked for all,' she said.

(Tambur) O maharaj! The famished and disappointed dog wound his way back. Slowly, he walked to the outskirts of Asanapari. He dug a ditch for himself.

The dog dug a ditch for himself.

He dug a ditch for himself.

He was tired and famished.

The dog lay in the ditch.

He lay in the ditch.

No one took notice of him.

Arjhan had married a new queen.

He had married a new queen.





He had married Hodra.

Hodra was swinging on her hindola.

She was swinging on her hindola.

On the hindola Hodra was swinging.

Hodra glanced out of the window.

She glanced out of the window.

She saw a black dog being shooed away.

The prudent and religious woman who knew better,

The prudent and religious woman who knew better,

Hodra recognized her father-in-law.

Hodra hitched high her sari.

She hitched high her sari.

She jumped down from her hindola.

Hodra raced down the steps of her cloud-capped palace.

She raced down the steps of her cloud-capped palace.

From her palace of clouds she climbed down.

Hodra ascended the stairs of Dhofa's palace.

She ascended the stairs of Dhofa's palace.

Straightaway she went to Dhofa's palace.

Dhofa received her with much warmth.

She received her with much warmth.

She came out to meet the new queen.

'Listen to what I say, O Dhofa,' said Hodra.

'Listen to what I say.

Let us think about our well-being.'





‘How many yagnas were performed for the peace of our
father-in-law’s soul?

How many yagnas were performed?

I’ve seen our father-in-law in the form of a dog.’

‘All the yagnas were performed inappropriately, O Hodra.

All the yagnas were performed inappropriately.

They were not performed the right way,’ said Dhofa.

‘The Pandavs were too haughty to listen to what I said, O Hodra.

They were too haughty to listen to what I said.

They didn’t pay any heed to me.’

‘Knowledge remains incomplete in the absence of a guru.

Knowledge remains incomplete in the absence of a guru.

Inappropriately performed final rites have no effect,’

said Dhofa.

‘The great master Harguru is my guru, O Hodra.

The great master Harguru is my guru.

And Gadhrovasi is the guru of Kutma.’

‘Although the Pandavs are the sovereigns of Asanapari,

Although they are the sovereigns of Asanapari,

Because of their haughtiness they are not respected,’

said Dhofa.

Hodra left Dhofa’s palace in great haste.

She left Dhofa’s palace in great haste.

She ran towards Kutma’s palace.

Thus spoke the newly-wedded queen to Kutma,

Thus spoke the newly-wedded queen to Kutma,

‘O mother, listen to what I say.’





‘Who is going to cook for the Pandav princes today, O mother?
Who is going to cook for the Pandav princes?
Let me cook for the Pandavs today.’

Hodra got busy cooking.
She got busy cooking.
She prepared thirty-two kinds of dishes.

Dhofa took a golden salver.
She took a golden salver.
She laid the food on the best of the platters.

Carrying the salver with them,
Carrying the salver with them,
Both queens set out for the outskirts of Asanapari.

Drawing veils over their faces,
Drawing veils over their faces,
The queens walked past the Pandav princes.

With a salver piled with food and a pitcher full of water,
With a salver piled with food and a pitcher full of water,
The queens set out to feed the dog at the outskirts.

Bhemo pondered for a while.
He pondered for a while.
‘They are surely my brother’s wives.’

‘Instead of serving the Pandav prince,
Instead of serving the Pandav prince,
To whom are they heading?’ thought Bhemo.

Hodra fed the black dog lying in the ditch.
She fed the black dog lying in the ditch.





The dog relished the thirty-two kinds of dishes.

Hodra served food and water to the dog.

She served food and water to the dog.

The dog ate and drank to his heart's content.

Bhemo was livid with anger.

He was livid with anger.

'Is the dog dearer to you than my brother?' seethed he.

'Is the dog your sweetheart, O queen?' he asked.

'Is the dog your sweetheart?

Your beloved should be served the best food, shouldn't he?'

'O bhabhi, should I break your skull for such an offence?

Should I break your skull for such an offence?

Or flog you till you bleed?' asked Bhemo.

'Should I scrape your skin and rub salt on it?

Should I scrape your skin and rub salt on it?

You should be punished in the severest way,' said Bhemo.

'Mind your language, O Bhemo,' said Dhofa.

'Mind your language.

Think twice before you speak.'

'This dog is our father-in-law, you fool!

This dog is our father-in-law.

You should be condemned to hell,' said Dhofa.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Hodra took the way to Kutma's palace. She walked with hasty steps.

'Listen to what I say, O mother-in-law,' said she, 'Always you feel





concerned about your sons. But look here, I've brought my father-in-law home. Despite having five sons he is agitated and restive. What to say of your sons? Why did you not shove them into a well on their birth? Had you five daughters in their place, your sons-in-law would have paid you more respect. The Pandavs should be condemned to hell. Pandu, the king, is afflicted with a thousand agonies. His soul awaits salvation but he rots in hell because of such unworthy sons.' *Khama!*

'Listen to what I say, O my daughters-in-law. We performed hundred yagnas for the peace of the king's soul. But all have been in vain.' (*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Kasna Avtar was present in the royal court of the Pandavs. 'It is time to perform the seventh yagna for the salvation of your father,' he said, 'The soul of Pandu should not be confined to hell.'

The Pandavs were the first living Gods who walked on the surface of this earth. Others were mortal men. They decided to perform the seventh yagna. This incident occurred during satyug but is narrated in the time of kaliyug. This is a tale of the exploits of brave and righteous people. The flower has withered but its fragrance lingers in the air. A narrator narrates the story of bygone days and the entire court listens to him intently. *Khama!*

Kasna Avtar said to Dhofa, 'Why are you so cross, O sister? One should not curse one's husband. You have done ill in the world. But tell us what ails you so badly?' Dhofa said to Avtar, 'Lend me your ear, O brother. Why should I care for these worthless persons? They promised to tread the path of bhakti. Everyday they sing bhajans in the praise of God. They worship their guru, but yet they have not become prudent. Who would care to talk to them? Not I. Those who ask for a slight get a slight. They are ignorant of your ways. They deserve my slights and taunts.' *Khama! Khama!*





(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! ‘O brother, you asked me to be polite to them but how can I?’ asked Dhofa. ‘Their father, despite having five sons, rots in hell. He is now born a black dog. The dog wanders in the streets of their kingdom and these unworthy sons roll in comfort. The father shudders in a ditch on the borders of Asanapari and his sons indulge in petty talk at court. What should I tell you, O brother,’ said Dhofa, ‘Today, the new bride queen went to feed their father. She bowed to the dog and offered him a salver full of food. But the thick-headed Bhemo abused her. How could he swear so at us? Despite having five sons, Pandu’s spirit haunts the maze of hell. Why don’t such sons die before their time?’ Kasma Avatar interrupted Dhofa, ‘Instead of cursing your husbands, why don’t you suggest a way out? Their father has been reborn a dog, his soul rotted in hell. You are a woman of prudence. Why don’t you draw us out of this calamitous situation?’

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! ‘Listen carefully to what I say. My words come from my heart. The father is reborn a dog and the sons roll in comfort. They don’t care to know why their father’s soul rots in hell. They don’t even care to know what they should do for his salvation. They are ignorant of how to perform a yagna for their father’s soul but they won’t take advice from anyone. Arrogant and haughty are they,’ said pious Dhofa.

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Dhofa’s words mellowed the proud Pandavs. They joined hands and implored Dhofa to pardon them. ‘What you say is true. We performed a hundred yagnas for our father’s peace but none was performed properly. Our father has been reborn a dog. Ill has been done in the world. Despite having five valiant sons like us, our father is a dog lying in a ditch on the outskirts of the town. We should die if we fail to perform our duty.’ The Pandavs prostrated at the feet of Dhofa. They requested her help to tread the right path. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends. *Khama!*





‘Despite having five sons, our father convulses in hell, O bhabhi.
Despite having five sons, our father convulses in hell.
Help us to walk the path of righteousness,’ said Bhemo.

‘Listen to what I say, O Pandavs.
Listen to what I say.
Lend me your ear, O Pandav princes,’ said Kasma Avtar.

‘You performed several yagnas,’ said Kasma Avtar.
‘You performed several yagnas.
In spite of several yagnas your father convulses in hell.’

‘Your efforts to liberate your father’s soul,
Your efforts to liberate your father’s soul,
Have been in vain,’ said Avtar.

‘Your father is reborn a dog,
Your father is reborn a dog.
Ill has been done in the world.’

‘You should be condemned to hell,’ said Dhofa.
‘You should be condemned to hell.
You could never break out from your shell of false pride.’

‘You snubbed your kith and kin,’ said Dhofa.
‘You snubbed your kith and kin.
You insulted elders during the yagna.’

‘We regret our past deeds, O Dhofa.
We regret our past deeds.
Help us to tread the right path,’ said the Pandavs.’

‘You didn’t invite Bala Harguru, O Pandavs,’ said Dhofa.
‘You didn’t invite Bala Harguru.





For he hails from a community considered lowly.’

‘We regret our past deeds, O Dhofa.

We regret our past deeds.

Help us to tread the right path,’ said the Pandavs.

‘Your guests were slighted, O Pandavs.

Your guests were slighted.

Arrogantly you treated them during the yagna,’ said Dhofa.

‘Because of your haughtiness, O Pandavs,’ said Dhofa.

‘Because of your haughtiness,

Your guests left without food and drink.’

‘Your guests left without food, O Pandavs,’ said Dhofa.

‘Your guests left without food.

Your father suffers on account of your mistakes.’

(Tambur) O maharaj!

‘Listen to what I say, O Pandav princes,’ said Dhofa, ‘Whosoever comes to participate in a yagna should be treated with respect. Do not discriminate between the rich and poor. Even our arch enemy has the right to be honoured during such religious occasions. Appease those who took offence and left without having a meal. You need to be polite and courteous. Only then does a yagna bear fruit. Only then do deities accept your offerings. But you did the contrary. You were bitter and unkind to your guests. You didn’t pay heed to your elders and peers. Many a guest left without eating. How do you expect the Gods to be pleased? Won’t your father be tormented for such haughty behavior?’ The Pandavs realized their folly. They bowed to Dhofa.





(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! 'You are indeed a Goddess,' said they. 'We have done ill in the world. Kindly show us the proper way to make a sacrifice for our father's soul. It should be liberated.'³⁶ Kasma Avtar said, 'O Pandavs, do not lament. I'll show you a way out. Perform the Sanetaro yagna for the liberation of your father's soul. Gather all things necessary to make this yagna fruitful.' (*Tambur*) May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

In Search of Virgin Gold

'Listen to what I say, O Pandavs.

Listen to what I say.

Lend me your ear,' said Kasma Avtar.

'My words come from my heart, O Pandavs.

My words come from my heart.

Listen intently to what I say.'

'We'll perform a yagna, O Pandavs.

We'll perform a yagna.

We'll perform the Sanetaro yagna.'

'Gather all things necessary for it, O Pandavs.

Gather all things necessary.

I'll tell you what we shall need.'

'Fetch a pitcher full of virgin water, O Pandavs.

Fetch a pitcher full of virgin water.

Some virgin soil we'll need.'

'Buy a man sold by his woman, O Pandavs.

Buy a man sold by his woman.

In the absence of such a man, the yagna will

remain incomplete.'





'Get some virgin gold, O Pandavs.
Get some virgin gold.
A shield made of the netherworld rhino's hide we will need.'

'The head of Jhalo Jhendro, O Pandavs,
The head of Jhalo Jhendro,
Someone should take up the challenge to get his head.'

'And the guru of Pandu, the king, O Pandavs,
The guru of Pandu, the king,
He should remain present during the yagna.'

(*Tambur*) *O maharaj!*

The royal assembly bustled about in a flurry of activity. Many a new challenge came their way. A *biro* was fashioned by rolling a betel leaf. It was circulated in the court to pose a challenge. *O maharaj!* Arjhan, the Pandav, pondered for a while. He was determined to take up the challenge. He picked up the *biro* to show his pluckiness. The queen of Arjhan felt apprehensive. 'Ill has been done in the world,' said she. 'Arjhan is a valiant warrior, there is no doubt. His strength is no less than that of a tiger in the wilderness. And for his father's sake he has taken up the challenge. But listen to what I say, O my brothers-in-law.' *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) *O ma...ha...raj!*³⁷ The queen of Arjhan was worried. She pleaded to her brothers-in-law, 'Ill has been done in the world. Arjhan shouldn't be sent to the netherworld. Arjhan is sensuous and self-indulgent. He may succumb to carnal urges. The king of paatal has many young princesses. Arjhan will be enamoured by them. If he goes down he'll never come back.' *O maharaj!* But Arjhan was determined to go. The queen said once again, 'If he stays there what will happen to our yagna?' *Khama!*





(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Arjhan turned to his queen, 'O queen, you worry too much. Your fear is unfounded. I am going for the sake of our father. I promise to return as soon as my task is accomplished.' *Khama! Bhalai!* (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The city of Asanapari was busy. Everyone assembled to bid farewell to Arjhan, the Pandav prince. *Khama! Bhalai!*

The city of Asanapari was bustling.
The people were bustling.
The swiftest bullock-carriages were decorated.

Arjhan, the Pandav prince, said to his queens.
He said to his queens,
'Listen to what I say, my queens.'

'Eat, drink and spend your time in merry-making, O queens!
Eat, drink and spend your time in merry-making.
In the comfort of my palace spend your nights and days.'

(An accompanist: 'If I survive this task, I'll be back.' The lead singer: *Khama!*)

'Worry you must not about my well-being, O queens.
Worry you must not about my well-being.
I promise to be back with virgin gold.'

Khama! Khama!

'Listen to what I say, O son of my mother-in-law.
Listen to what I say.
For twelve years I promise to keep you happy in my bed,'
said the queen.

(An accompanist: 'He is going for the sake of his father.' The lead singer: *Khama!*)





Arjhan, the Pandav prince, set out on his journey.
 He set out on his journey.
 He set out in a bullock carriage.

His queen said to him,
 His queen said to him,
 'Take good care of yourself.'

For the sake of his father's salvation,
 For the sake of his father's salvation,
 Arjhan set off on a difficult journey.

Puffs of dust rose in the air.
 Puffs of dust rose in the air.
 His carriages travelled at great speed.

Arjhan's queens and brothers bade him farewell.
 His queens and brothers bade him farewell.
 They gathered to wish him success.

Raising clouds of dust Arjhan set off.
 Raising clouds of dust he set off.
 He set off for a distant destination.

Khama! Khama!

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Arjhan prepared for a journey to the netherworld. 'How shall I live alone in this palace of clouds?' his queen asked him. 'I'll feel lonely and forlorn. How can you leave me alone? O king, change your mind and come back to the cloud-capped palace with me.' But Arjhan was determined. He said to his queen, 'You must not worry. I'll be back as soon as I accomplish my task.' *Khama!*





(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Arjhan turned to his brothers and said, 'Don't worry for my well being. I won't return without achieving my objective. I bid you farewell till I come back.' (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Arjhan whipped his white bullocks and the bullocks took flight. He took the way to the netherworld. Raising clouds of dust, he travelled along the path. *Khama*!

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Asanapari was bustling with activity. Arjhan, the Pandav prince, set out to fetch virgin gold. He travelled at the speed of lightning. He reached the netherworld in no time.

Arjhan reached the netherworld.

He reached the netherworld.

He travelled a long distance to reach the netherworld.

Arjhan stopped his carriage by the Kanogar lake.

He stopped his carriage by the Kanogar lake.

At the banks of the lake he halted.

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*!

Arjhan disembarked. He unyoked his bullocks and ambled around in the surrounding garden. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Arjhan strolled around in the glistening green garden. The garden of the land of the serpent was bursting with blooms. He breathed in the fragrance. He was a sensuous and self-indulgent person. Happily, he walked in the garden of the netherworld. He smelt the fragrant flowers. He whiled away his time moving about in the glistening garden. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Arjhan returned to the lake after a while. He climbed on to the carriage. Cool breeze swept across his face. He pondered for a while, 'How will I get the virgin gold?' His eyelids became heavy. Soon the Pandav prince drifted into deep sleep.





Arjhan climbed back into his carriage.
He climbed back into his carriage.
He drifted into deep slumber.

Arjhan was in deep slumber.
He was in deep slumber.
Arjhan lay snoring in his carriage.

(An accompanist: His snores sounded like cascading water. The lead singer: *Khama!*)

Arjhan was in deep slumber.
He was in deep slumber.
His snores sounded like cascading water.

The serpent sentries were on vigil.
They were on vigil.
They arrived in the glistening green garden.

They noticed Arjhan's footprints,
They noticed Arjhan's footprints.
Arjhan had left deep marks on the sand.

With hissing sounds the serpent sentinels came to a halt.
With hissing sounds they came to a halt.
They talked among themselves.

'These marks are left by someone sturdy and stout,' said they.
'These marks are left by someone sturdy and stout.'
The intruder seems to be sturdy and stout.'

Following the marks they arrived at the lakeside.
Following the marks they arrived at the lakeside.
They came to the Kanogar lake.





They spotted the carriage by the lake.

They spotted the carriage by the lake.

They came closer to peep in.

The handsome Pandav was fast asleep.

The handsome Pandav was fast asleep.

The serpent sentries were impressed by him.

The serpent sentries pondered for a while.

They pondered for a while.

Biting a sleeping man would be viewed a crime.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

The serpent sentinels were on vigil. On arriving at the garden they saw mighty footprints. *Khama! Khama!* *(Tambur)* They trailed them in the glistening green garden. They said to one another, 'O brothers, look at these huge foot prints. Someone has trudged about in the garden. Look, his footprints are everywhere, near the flowering plants and under the trees. The intruder has strolled all over the place.' The serpent sentries pondered for a while. 'None from the netherworld has such huge feet. Our intruder must be a Pandav prince. Let's find out where our enemy hides.' The serpent sentries followed the trail. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Hissing and spluttering, they arrived at the lake. They conversed among themselves, 'The Pandavs are our sworn enemies. Once when our king had gone to Asanapari, Arjhan, the Pandav, had burnt his hoods. The Pandavs are our adversaries.' Talking thus, they arrived at the lakeside. They beheld Arjhan's carriage. They climbed up to peep in. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* O! what did they behold inside? They saw a man with sculpted features in deep slumber. What a good-looking man he was! His well-built body seemed like the summit of Mount Abu. The serpent sentinels stood amazed. *Khama!*





(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The serpent sentries watched from a distance. Arjhan's arms were like the mighty branches of a banyan tree. And his thighs were as huge as the pillars of a palace. His face was like the full moon, and his pointed nose seemed like the flame of fire. His dark bushy moustache spread across his face and his deep dark eyes were burning bright. The serpents stood stunned. They pondered for a while, 'One should not kill a man in slumber. Let us not kill such a fine-looking man.' *Khama! Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! 'O brothers, do you remember? Our king had gone to the land of mortals for the sake of a woman. He wanted to enjoy someone else's wife. He was duly punished for his crime. We don't want to commit a sin. Spare him from your deadly venom.' Thinking thus, the twenty-six sentinels returned to their homes. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! After a while it was the turn of lesser reptiles to go over. They arrived in the glistening green garden. They too noticed the footmarks. 'An intruder seems to be at large. We'll prove our prowess by catching him.' Hissing and spluttering, they arrived at the lake. Leaping and jumping, they climbed into the carriage. They bit their sleeping enemy. O *maharaj*! The Pandav prince died in his sleep. Ill had been done in the world.

'Listen to what I say, O father,' said the princess of paataal,

'Listen to what I say.

I want to talk to you about my heart's desire.'

'Let me go for a swim, O father.

Let me go for a swim.

Allow me to go for a swim in the lake.'

'I want to go out in cool air, O father,' said the princess of paataal.

'I want to go out in the cool air.

Allow me to go out for fresh air.'





(An accompanist: She has been worshipping the Gods to have Arjhan as a husband. The lead singer: *Khama!*)

The king of the netherworld said to his daughter,
He said to his daughter,
'Listen to what I say, O daughter.'

(An accompanist: Don't let her go. The lead singer: *Khama!*)

'Ours is an illustrious family, O daughter,' said the king.
'Ours is an illustrious family.
We can't behave like commoners.'

'Better remain in a veil of modesty, O daughter.
Better remain in a veil of modesty.
In a veil you should remain.'

'You aren't an ordinary girl, O daughter.
You aren't an ordinary girl.
You should not think of going out alone.'

Jeevta! Bhalai!

(Tambur) O maharaj!

'I'll commit suicide if you won't allow me to go, O father,' said the princess. 'You'll be blamed for my death. I'll cut my tongue and die. The death of a virgin is a blot on the family.' The king pondered for a while. 'Go if you must, Hirapath, my child. But please don't go alone. Take your friends and companions with you. Half the girls should walk ahead of you and the remaining half should follow you. So that no one else sets eye on you. O child, why are you so adamant?'

(Tambur) O maharaj! Along with her five and twenty friends, Hirapath went to the glistening green garden. They ambled around in the





garden. They breathed in the fragrance of the jhasi, javli, ketki and mogra flowers. With cool air sweeping across their faces, they strolled around and about in the glistening green garden. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! After a while the girls thought of going to the Kanogar lake. On reaching the lake they beheld the carriage.

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Hirapath, the princess, said to her companions, 'I can see a strange object by the lake. Let us have a closer look at this peculiar thing.' (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Hirapath and her companions stood by the carriage. Hirapath climbed up the carriage to have a closer look. And what did she see? A man so strapping and attractive! She pondered for a while, 'None but Arjhan, the Pandav prince, can be so attractive. And only he can dare to come to the netherworld. He must be Arjhan, the Pandav. Who else can be so striking? Look at his deep, strong chest and arms like banyan branches. His bushy moustache spreads across his face and his body is like Mount Abu's highest summit.' Tears coursed down the cheek of the princess. 'O Lord, ill has been done in the world. Since the days my father used to go to Dhavlo Gadh, I have been listening about Arjhan's fame. Everyday I pray to God to grant me the boon of having him as a husband. I have observed many a vow for his sake. And here he lies, dead before me!' *Khama! Khama!*

'Listen to what I say, O girls,' said Hirapath.

'Listen to what I say.

Listen intently to what I say.'

'Ill has been done in the world, O girls.

Ill has been done in the world.

A great catastrophe has befallen me.'

'There is no time for delay, O friends.

There is no time for delay.

You need not delay.'





'Go to my father's palace, O friends.
Go to my father's palace.
And ask for the urn of nectar.'

(An accompanist: O Lord, her beloved lay dead. The lead singer:
Khama!)

(*Tambur*) *O maharaj!*

Hirapath said to her companions, 'Hurry off to my father's palace and ask for the urn of nectar. And also bring a twig of the kaniyor tree.' *Khama! O maharaj!* Hurriedly, the girls went to the palace. They raced through the streets and alleyways. They arrived at the palace of the king of the netherworld. 'O king,' said they, 'Act fast, this is not a time to delay. The princess has asked for the urn of nectar. She also wants a twig of the kaniyor tree.' The king said, 'I did try to stop her from going there. But she did not pay heed.' The king, however, cheated the girls. Instead of nectar, he gave them poison. *O maharaj!* The girls took the urn and ran back to the lake. They reached the Kanogar lake in no time.

The king cheated the girls.
He cheated the girls.
Instead of nectar he gave them an urn filled with poison.

The girls ran towards the lake.
They ran towards the lake.
Hurriedly, they arrived at the Kanogar lake.

Hirapath pondered for a while.
She pondered for a while.
She could not trust her father.

'Is it an urn filled with nectar or poison?'





Is it an urn filled with nectar or poison?
Should I trust my father?’

(An accompanist: Why don’t you try it on someone else first?
The lead singer: *Khama!*)

They saw a donkey coming to the lake.
They saw a donkey coming to the lake.
They decided to sprinkle the potion on him.

As they sprinkled the poison on the donkey,
As they sprinkled the poison on the donkey,
It fell dead on the ground.

Hirapath, the princess, got annoyed.
She got annoyed.
She condemned her father for deceiving her.

She spoke to her companions.
She spoke to her companions.
‘Listen to what I say, O girls.’

‘Go back to my father.
Go back to my father.
Ask him to give you the urn of nectar.’

The girls took the way to the court.
They took the way to the court.
They arrived in the royal assembly.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Hirapath was annoyed. ‘Ill has been done in the world,’ she thought.
‘A father has tried to deceive his own daughter.’ She condemned her
father for the deceit. She cursed the kingdom of the netherworld.





Khama! Khama!

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Hirapath said to her friends, 'Go back to my father and ask him to give the urn of nectar.' The girls took the way to the king's court. They arrived at his court. They showed the king the fake potion. They asked him to give them the urn of nectar. 'Your daughter is upset and annoyed,' they said to the king. 'She has threatened to give her life if you refuse to comply with her request.' The king pondered for a while. 'She is so adamant! She cannot be deceived.' The king gave in. He handed the urn of nectar to the girls. The girls returned to the Kanogar lake. They dipped the kaniyor twig in the potion and sprinkled it on the dead donkey. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* The donkey came back to life. *Khama! Khama!*

(*Tambur*) The princess took the urn in her hands. She climbed into the carriage. Perched on the edge of the carriage, she looked at the donkey. Life had animated him. The donkey walked away swiftly. The princess pondered for a while. 'Like the donkey, my Pandav prince will come back to life but he too will walk away from me.' She turned to her friends and said, 'O girls, make haste. Bring some leaves of the mango tree and some turmeric powder. Fetch other items necessary for performing a wedding ceremony. I'll marry his corpse and then bring him back to life. Or all my aspirations will remain unfulfilled.'

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* The girls hurried to carry out the task. They brought leaves and turmeric powder. They fetched all the things necessary for a wedding ceremony. Hirapath tied *mindhol* around Arjhan's wrist. The girls performed the wedding ceremony. By the Kanogar lake, Hirapath wedded the corpse of her beloved. She pondered for a while, 'Now that our wedding has been solemnized, I'll bring him back to life.'

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* She dipped the kaniyor twig in the nectar and





sprinkled it over the Pandav prince. Arjhan fluttered his eyes open. He saw Hirapath sitting by him. They stared into each other's eyes. Astounded by the other's beauty, each remained dazed for some time. Arjhan stared back at the princess. His gaze penetrated deep into her womb. It impregnated Hirapath, the princess. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

'Listen to what I say, O Pandav prince,' said Hirapath.

'Listen to what I say.

I want to tell you about my heart's desire.'

'Who has sent you to the land of your enemy, O prince?

Who has sent you to the land of your enemy?

Why have you come to your enemy's kingdom?'

'I was eagerly waiting for you.

I was eagerly waiting for you.

Even in my dreams, I awaited you, O prince.'

(An accompanist: O Arjhan, she was dying to see you. The lead singer: *Khama!*)

'What has made you come to paataal, Arjhan?

What has made you come to paataal?

Pray, relate the cause of your journey.'

'Tell me, why did you risk your life, O Arjhan?

Why did you risk your life?

For whose sake have you come to the land of your enemy?'

'For the peace of my father's soul, O princess.

For the peace of my father's soul.

We want to perform a yagna,' said Arjhan.





‘I’ve come to fetch virgin gold, O princess.
I’ve come to fetch virgin gold.
I want the virgin gold of the netherworld.’

(An accompanist: He has come for virgin gold. The lead singer:
Khama!)

The princess fetched virgin gold for her beloved.
She brought virgin gold for Arjhan.
She gave Arjhan some virgin gold.

(*Tambur*) *O maharaj!*

‘I was waiting for you, O Arjhan,’ said Hirapath, ‘Even in my dreams I think of you. I have pleaded with all the Gods for the boon to marry you. At last you are here, before me, but tell me, O prince, for whose sake have you come to the land of your enemy? Who has sent you to the netherworld? You have stepped into the jaws of death. You were bitten by a poisonous snake and lay dead by the lake. Fortunately, we saw your corpse lying in the carriage. We obtained nectar to bring you back to life. But I wonder what has brought you here? Tell me, O prince, why did you come here?’

(*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* Arjhan said to the princess of the netherworld, ‘I have come on a special errand. We have arranged a yagna for the peace of our father’s soul. For the success of the yagna we need some virgin gold.’ *O maharaj!* The princess of the netherworld fetched virgin gold for Arjhan. ‘Here is virgin gold for you. Take it and depart for your land. O prince, consummate your yagna. But do me a favour, promise that you will not forget me,’ said Hirapath. Taking the virgin gold with him, Arjhan climbed into his carriage. *Khama!*

The word reached the court of the Pandavs.
The word reached the court of the Pandavs.





They gathered to welcome Arjhan on the outskirts.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Hirapath bade Arjhan goodbye. They parted with heavy hearts. Arjhan whipped his white bullocks. The bullocks started off with lightning speed. Clouds of dust rose as they drew past. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Arjhan left the netherworld behind. Winding his way back, he arrived in the land of mortals. He led his carriage in the direction of Asanapari. Clouds of dust rose as he went along the path. A mantle of dust shrouded the hills and mountain summits on either side of the path. The world was canopied with dust and the sand clouds blown by the carriage-wheels. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! The Pandavs eagerly awaited Arjhan's return. Dhofa was restless and impatient. Kutma was worried for his well-being. She strained her eyes over the horizon. Suddenly, the sky became hazy. Like an impending storm, Arjhan's carriage appeared in the distance. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Everyone felt elated. With lighted lamps they gathered at the outskirts of Asanapari to welcome Arjhan. They strewed kumkum and grains of rice in his way. With much revelry, he was welcomed. Arjhan went to the royal court. The five Pandav brothers embraced him. Kasna Avtar said, 'You have proved your mettle. You have made your parents' name immortal.' *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Arjhan thus brought virgin gold to Asanapari. After a while Avtar said, 'Lend me your ear, O Pandavs.' The Pandav princes listened to him intently.

A Woman sells her Man

'Listen to what I say, O Pandavs,' said Kasna Avtar.

'Listen to what I say.

Lend me your ear.'





'You need to get a man sold by his woman, O Pandavs.
You need to get a man sold by his woman.
Make haste, this is not a time to delay.'

Bhemjhal, the Pandav prince, said to his brothers.
He said to his brothers,
'Listen to what I say.'

'I'll go in search of such a man, O brothers.
I'll go in search of such a man.
I'll bring a man sold by his woman.'

Bhemjhal, the mighty Pandav prince,
Bhemjhal, the mighty prince,
He set out to buy a man sold by his woman.

With short steps and long strides,
With sort steps and long strides,
Bhemo travelled from place to place.

He visited small and big towns.
He visited small and big towns.
He wandered in lanes and alleyways.

At the marketplace he shouted aloud,
At the marketplace he shouted aloud,
'I want to buy a man from his woman.'

'O women of the town, I'll pay you a dream price,'
shouted Bhemo.

I'll pay you a dream price.
Sell me your man at a high price.'





(*Tambur*) O maharaj!

Bhemo pondered for a while. He said aloud, 'I'll try to buy a man from his woman.' He bid farewell to his brothers. Bhemo set off to carry out the task. He moved from town to town. At each town, standing at the marketplace, he shouted, 'Listen to me, O womenfolk and tell me your price. I'll pay you in gold and silver. I'll give you pedigree elephants and horses in exchange. I want to buy a man from you. Tell me your price and sell me your man.' (*Tambur*) O maharaj! The women mocked at the Pandav prince. 'He is out of his mind indeed!' they said. *Khama!*

'Listen to what I say, O Bhemo,' said a wise woman.

'Listen to what I say.

Why do you propose such a weird thing?'

'A man is the protector of his woman, O fool.

A man is the protector of his woman.

He provides her with shelter.'

'Man and wife are incomplete without each other.

They are incomplete without each other.

No woman will sell you her husband.'

(An accompanist: What will you do now, O Bhemjhal? The lead singer: *Khama!*)

'Without a man, one's bed chamber seems dismal, O Bhemo.

Without a man, one's bed chamber seems dismal.

Without him one's days become dull,' said a wise woman.

'We adorn ourselves to please our man, O fool.

We adorn ourselves to please our man.

Without him life becomes aimless.'





‘Better wind your way back, O Bhemo.
Better wind your way back.
You won’t succeed in buying a man from us.’

A frustrated Bhemo left the town.
A frustrated Bhemo left the town.
Hurriedly, he walked away from the marketplace.

Jeevta! Bhalai!

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Bhemo, the Pandav prince, moved from town to town. As he passed through the marketplace he would shout, ‘Listen, O womenfolk, I am here to buy a man. You name your price and I’ll pay.’ The women laughed at him. They took him for a crank. A wise woman said to him, ‘Are you out of your mind? No woman will ever come forward to sell her husband. A woman always respects her man. She looks upon him as her protector. A house without a man is like a cremation ground.’ *Khama! (Tambur) O maharaj!* A crestfallen Bhemo left the place. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

Bhemo travelled to another town.
He travelled to another town.
Hurriedly, he went to another town.

Bhemo stopped at the marketplace.
He stopped at the marketplace.
Loudly, he spoke to the people around.

‘I have come to buy a man, O womenfolk.
I have come to buy a man.
I’ll pay you well for your man,’ said Bhemo.





You name your price, O dames.
 You name the price.
 And you'll get it for selling your man.'

(Tambur) O maharaj!

A woman came forward and said, 'If you please, take one of us but we cannot think of selling our husbands even in our dreams. Aren't you aware that without a man a house looks like a cremation ground? But if you really want to buy such a man, go to a place called Kamru.³⁸ Nathi, the courtesan, may sell you one of her men. Only a woman of her rank can make such deals. No householder would do such a thing. Better go to Kamru.' *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Bhemo took the way to Kamru. He wandered through the lanes and alleyways. He pleaded with the women of Kamru to sell a man. Nathi, the courtesan, heard him shout. She came out of her house and beckoned him close. Bhemo turned towards her place. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Nathi said to him, 'O stranger, why are you shouting so? Name your business.' *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! 'I've come here on a special errand. I have come to buy a man. I am willing to pay any price. I am desperate,' said Bhemo. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Nathi, the courtesan, said to him, 'Tell me, O stranger, for how many men will you pay a price? Numerous men visit my place every night.' Bhemo could not believe his luck. Eagerly, he waited for the courtesan to name her price. As night enveloped the earth, many a man queued outside her place. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Bhemo pointed to a healthy man and Nathi named her price. Willingly, Bhemo parted with the sum. He had been able to buy a man sold by his woman.

(Tambur) O maharaj! Taking the man with him, Bhemo set out for Asanapari. His brothers were eagerly waiting for him. They saw two people approaching the town. They raced to the outskirts. They





welcomed Bhemo with much warmth and led him straight to the royal court. Happily, Bhemo said to Avtar, 'See Kasna Avtar, how I have accomplished the task. Now name the next item you need to accomplish the yagna. We, the worthy sons of Pandu, shall procure every item you need. We want to liberate our father's soul from hell.' *Khama!*

Virgin Water

'Listen to what I say, O Pandavs,' said Kasna Avtar.

'Listen to what I say.

Listen intently to what I say.'

'We need some virgin water, O Pandavs.

We need some virgin water.

Fetch some virgin water at the earliest.'

Nakro, the Pandav prince, said aloud,

Nakro, the Pandav prince, said aloud,

'Lend me your ear, O brothers.'

'I take up this challenge, O brothers.

I take up this challenge.

I'll bring virgin water for our father's sake.'

Nakro, the Pandav prince, set out on a voyage.

He set out on a voyage.

He set off to fetch virgin water.

With long strides and short steps,

With long strides and short steps,

Nakro walked past several places.

Nakro beheld a step-well.





He beheld a step-well.

He arrived at a step-well called Sarja.

Nakro descended the steps.

He descended the steps.

He descended the steps of the Sarja well.

Nakro bent down to fill a pitcher.

He bent down to fill a pitcher.

He filled his pitcher with virgin water.

The guardian deity of the well called him back.

The guardian deity called him back.

‘Listen to what I say, O Pandav.’

‘Come down and speak to me,’ said she.

‘Come down and speak to me.

You’ll have to come down to me.’

‘I’m the guardian deity of this well.

I’m the guardian deity of this well.

Why did you take water without my permission?’

‘You need to pay a price for your offense.

You need to pay a price for your offense.

Take me along as your bride.’

The deity stared hard at the Pandav prince.

She stared hard at the Pandav prince.

Dazed, Nakro fell into the water of the step-well.

Khama!





(Tambur) O maharaj!

The Pandavs impatiently waited for their brother. Bhemo said, 'I'll go and find out what has happened to Nakro.' He set out in search of Nakro. He arrived at the step-well. He descended into the Sarja well to fill his pitcher. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Bhemo bent over the water and filled his pitcher. As he was climbing back, the Goddess of the step-well stopped him. 'Who are you, O stranger,' asked she. 'Why have you come here and with whose permission did you enter my water? Now that you have broken the law, you will have to pay for it. You'll have to marry me.' 'I have not come here to marry anyone,' said Bhemo, 'And I am in a hurry. I cannot afford to waste time.' Jal Jogni, the guardian deity, said, 'O stranger, let me have a look at your face.' Bhemo turned around. Jal Jogni stared so hard at him that he felt dazed. He fell dead in the water beside his brother. *Khama! Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Bhemo, the mighty Pandav prince, fell dead in the step-well. The bodies of the two Pandav princes lay floating in the water. Kasna Avtar and the other Pandavs impatiently waited for their brothers. Dhofa and Kutma were worried. Sadev said to his brothers, 'We have waited for a long time. I'll go and see what has happened to our brothers. There's no time to delay.' Sadev set out in search of his brothers. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Walking with long strides and short steps, Sadev went in the direction of the step-well. He descended the steps and went down. He stood aghast as he saw the bodies of his brothers. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Sadev, the Pandav prince, pondered for a while, 'Ill has been done in the world. What must have happened to my brothers? How could they have died?' 'Who are you to enter my domain?' Jal Jogni asked. Sadev bent down to fill his pitcher. 'O stranger, you cannot take water without my permission,' she spoke again, 'Along with the virgin water, you'll have to take me, a virgin





deity.' Sadev said to the guardian Goddess, 'O deity, right now I cannot wait to marry you. We are anxious to perform a yagna for the sake of our father's soul. I have come here to fetch virgin water. How can I stay back here when my brothers are waiting for me?'

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! Sadev said to Jal Jogni, 'Two of my brothers lie dead here and the others are waiting for me at the royal court of Asanapari. I can't afford to waste time.' The deity said, 'You might be getting late. You are impatient to return to your brothers. But I won't allow you to you go. You can't leave my waters without marrying me.' *Khama!* Sadev pondered for a while, 'O Goddess of the well, first bring back my brothers to life. Only then will I speak to you.' 'But first give me your word that you'll marry me,' replied Jal Jogni. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! Sadev, the Pandav prince, gave his word. 'I'll die rather than go back on my word,' said he. Jal Jogni conjured an urn of nectar and a twig of the kaniyor tree. She dipped the twig in the nectar and sprinkled the water on the Pandav princes. Life animated Nakro and Bhemo. They filled their pitchers with the virgin water. Hurriedly, they started for Asanapari. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! Sadev, the Pandav prince, acquired the virgin water. He took a pitcher full of virgin water to the dhuni at Asanapari. The Pandavs were anxious to obtain all the necessary items to accomplish the yagna. They were keen to perform a yagna for the liberation of their father's soul. *Khama!*

Bala Harguru

(*Tambur*) O maharaj!

Kasna Avtar said to the Pandav princes, 'This is not a time to delay. Try to obtain all the necessary items to perform the yagna. You also





need to invite Dhofa's guru. Someone should go and escort him here with respect.' 'Since he is my guru, I'll go to invite him. I'll bring him here with due respect,' said Dhofa. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Dhofa set out to invite her guru. She walked past many a city and town. She pondered for a while, 'Bala Harguru, my guru, is indeed a holy man. But he lives in a small hut. Its entrance is narrow and low. I'll need to bend low to enter his hut. The guru will be sitting in a meditative trance. He will not know that I have come. He will not come out on his own. I'll have to bend down to enter his dwelling.' Bala Harguru was meditating by his dhuni. He had a vision of Dhofa. He read her mind and was livid with anger. 'If my hut is too small why do you want to come here?' thought he. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! An infuriated guru waited for Dhofa. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) Dhofa, the queen arrived at the dhuni of her guru. O *maharaj*! 'You dwell in a palace of clouds, O Dhofa, and I live in a small hut. Why should a person from a cloud-capped palace visit the dweller of a small hut?' said he. Dhofa was taken aback. She pondered for a while. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! 'How did he read my mind?' she thought. She prostrated before her guru. She touched his feet in all humility. 'Forgive me, O holy one, I made a mistake. I have erred. Forgive me for my vagaries.'

The guru read Dhofa's mind.

He read Dhofa's mind.

He could read what she thought on her way.

'Listen to what I say O guru,' said Dhofa,

'Listen to what I say.

I am ashamed of my folly.'

'I've come to invite you, O guru.

I've come to invite you.

I wish to take you to Asanapari.'





‘For what do you invite me to your place?’ asked the guru.

‘For what do you invite me to your place?’

Why do you want me to visit Asanapari?’

‘For the emancipation of my father-in-law,’ said she.

‘For the emancipation of my father-in-law.

We want to perform a yagna for the sake of Pandu, the king.’

‘To grace the occasion of the yagna.

To grace the occasion of the yagna.

I’ve come to fetch you.’

‘Listen to what I say, O Dhofa,’ said the guru.

‘Listen to what I say.

Listen to me intently.’

‘I am a low bred man.

I am a low bred man.

I won’t visit the house of a high born family.’

(Tambur) O maharaj!

‘O guru,’ said Dhofa, ‘We have erred. But you are kind and benign. Forgive us for our past folly. I have come here to invite you and I’ll not leave without taking you with me.’ She prostrated at the guru’s feet over and over again and said, ‘We want to perform a yagna for the peace of my father-in-law’s soul, but without your presence it will remain futile. We need you to consummate the rite. I’ve come to invite you to the dhuni of Asanapari.’ Bala Harguru said to his disciple, ‘I can’t come with you. I am a low-born man. I do not go to the palaces of noblemen. Bhemo, the Pandav prince, had insulted me by serving me water from a distance. Hovering over me he had poured water in my bowl. I won’t oblige the arrogant Pandavs.’





(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Dhofa pondered for a while. ‘The Pandavs have done ill in this world. They have insulted a holy man. Owing to their conceit all their yagnas have failed. Their father was consigned to hell and now he is reborn as a dog.’ She said, ‘I plead you, O guru, put their misdeeds behind you and accompany me to Asanapari. The soul of my father-in-law should be set free.’

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! ‘I wish I could oblige you, Dhofa,’ said her guru, ‘But Bhemo had insulted me. He slighted me as I hail from a low caste. I’ll come only on one condition. Bhemo should be yoked to my carriage and pull it to Asanapari. A nose-string should be thrust in his nose, and he should look through the fodder served by me. If he agrees to this condition, I’ll come to the yagna at Asanapari.’ *Khama! Khama!* (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Dhofa tried to appease her guru. But he did not pay any heed to her pleas. She bowed to him and returned to Asanapari. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends. *Khama!*

Dhofa returned to Asanapari.

She returned to Asanapari.

Hurriedly, she set out on the journey to Asanapari.

Dhofa arrived at the dhuni of the Pandavs.

She arrived at the dhuni of the Pandavs.

Straightaway she went to the dhuni.

‘Listen to what I say, O Pandav princes,’ said she.

‘Listen to what I say.

Listen intently to what I say.’

‘You have done ill in the world, O Pandav princes.

You have done ill in the world.

You have created ill-will in my guru.’





‘Pay for you past deeds, O Pandav princes.
Pay for your past deeds.
Your vanity has devised your doom.’

‘My guru has refused to oblige us, O Pandav princes.
My guru has refused to oblige us.
He will not participate in the yagna.’

‘Bhemo, your arrogant behavior has offended him.
Bhemo, your arrogant behavior has offended him.
He has declined our invitation,’ said Dhofa.

The Pandavs pondered for a while.
They pondered for a while.
The five brothers pondered over the issue.

‘The guru should be appeased,’ said they.
‘The guru should be appeased.
Tell us what to do to reconcile with him, O Dhofa.’

‘Listen to what I say,’ said Dhofa.
‘Listen to what I say.
Listen to me intently, O Pandav princes.’

‘Tether Bhemo to a carriage.
Tether him to a carriage.
Make him pull the carriage of the guru.’

(Tambur) O maharaj!

‘We are prepared to do anything to appease the guru,’ said the Pandavs.
‘Your prowess is matchless but you suffer on account of your arrogance,’ said Dhofa, ‘You were disrespectful to your elders. You affronted your kin. You deviated from the path of dharma and





displeased the Gods. Bhemo was the haughtiest of all. He has displeased our relatives and guests.’ (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! ‘O mighty Bhemo, you misbehaved with my guru. He has declined our invitation. He will come on one condition alone. He wants a nose-string thrust in your nose that should be yoked to the bullock. He wants you to pull his carriage to the dhuni. You will inspect the fodder served by him. Unless you agree to this condition, he will not oblige us. And without his presence our yagna will remain unfulfilled.’ *Khama*!

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The Pandavs pondered for a while. They felt mortified. ‘How can we ask Bhemo to pull a carriage alike a bullock? But without the guru our yagna will not be accomplished.’ The Pandavs were in a quandary. Avtar said, ‘As you sow, so shall you reap. Bhemo, you have caused the crisis. You should suffer the consequences.’ Bhemo, the Pandav, bent his head in shame. A nose-string was forced through his nose. He was yoked to a carriage. Bhemo dragged the carriage to the dhuni of Bala Harguru near the banks of the Ganga and Godavari rivers. *Khama*! May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

Bhemo, the Pandav prince, was yoked to a carriage.

He was yoked to a carriage.

He dragged the carriage up to the banks of the

Ganga and Godavari.

Bhemo dragged the carriage to the rivers.

He dragged the carriage to the rivers.

He arrived at the dhuni of Bala Harguru.

Bhemo stood at the dhuni.

He stood at the dhuni.

He stood by the dhuni of Dhofa’s guru.





The guru served fodder to Bhemo.
 He served fodder to Bhemo.
 He wanted Bhemo to graze on it.

Bhemo grazed the fodder.
 He grazed the fodder.
 He was cured of his conceit.

Inscrutable are the ways of one's guru.
 Inscrutable are the ways of one's guru.
 A guru makes one tread on the path of virtue.

Bala Harguru climbed into the carriage.
 He climbed into the carriage.
 They embarked on the journey to Asanapari.

Bhemo dragged the guru's carriage.
 He dragged the guru's carriage.
 He took the way to Asanapari.

They reached the outskirts.
 They reached the outskirts.
 They reached the outskirts of Asanapari.

The Pandav brothers went to the outskirts.
 They went to the outskirts.
 They extended a warm welcome to the guru.

The Pandavs prostrated at the feet of the guru.
 They prostrated at the feet of the guru.
 They expressed their reverence to him.

The Pandavs led the guru to the dhuni.
 They led him to the dhuni.





Respectfully, they led him to the dhuni.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Bhemo was yoked to a carriage. He pulled the carriage all the way to the guru's dhuni. He ate fodder to appease the guru. He prostrated at his feet. Bhemo requested Bal Harguru to accompany him to Asanapari. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! For the sake of his parent, Bhemo rolled at the feet of Bala Harguru. The Pandavs had learnt a lesson. They realized their mistake. One needs to be polite and courteous. 'You are gallant, O Pandavs,' said Avtar, 'But you ought to be gracious.' The guru cured the Pandav princes of their conceit. Bhemo, the mighty Pandav rolled at his feet. 'I've come to take you to Asanapari, O guru,' said Bhemo, 'Please grace our dhuni with your presence. Be seated in the carriage, I'll pull it all the way to Asanapari.' The Pandav's pride had vanished. The guru took his seat in the carriage and they set off for Asanapari. The Pandav princes were waiting eagerly for them. They raced to the outskirts to receive them. *Khama! (Tambur) O maharaj!* 'There is no time to delay, O Pandav princes. You still need to get the head of Jhalo Jhendro to consummate the yagna,' said Kasma Avtar.

'Listen to what I say, O Pandav princes,' said Kasma Avtar.

'Listen to what I say.

There is no time to delay.'

'You still need to get the head of Jhalo Jhendro.

You still need to get the head of Jhalo Jhendro.

And invite Kutma's guru,' said Kasma Avtar.

Bhemo took the challenge of bringing the head.

He took the challenge of bringing the head.





Bhemo, the man of prowess, took the challenge.

This is a tale of brave people.

This is a tale of brave people.

This is a story of worthy warriors.

Bhemo tore up the path.

He tore up the path.

Raising clouds of dust as he passed along.

Head of Jhalo Jhendro

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Avtar told the Pandav brothers to get the head of Jhalo Jhendro. He told them to invite the guru of Kutma to Asanapari. The Pandav princes were horrified to hear the name of Jhalo Jhendro. *Khama! (Tambur) O maharaj!* The Pandav princes pondered for a while, 'Who can accomplish this task?' Jhalo Jhendro was a mighty man. He was known for his tremendous strength. The Pandavs could not meet one another's eyes. They stood in silence with bent heads. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Avtar rolled a betel leaf into a biro. In the royal court of the Pandavs, the biro was circulated. None had the courage to pick the challenge. A mother should give birth to only brave and gallant sons or her motherhood is wasted. *Khama! (Tambur) O maharaj!* 'I am ready to risk my life,' said Bhemo. He picked the biro of betel leaf and gulped it down. His eyes shone wildly as he spoke. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Bhemo took the challenge. He held high his mace and declared, 'I'll bring the head of Jhalo Jhendro.' But the Pandav princes were apprehensive. Jhalo Jhendro was a mighty man. Bhemo turned to Bala Harguru, 'How can I beat this burly man? He is strong enough to beat our army. Show me a way to kill him single-handedly.'





(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! 'Listen intently to what I say, O Bhemo,' said the guru, 'Jhalo Jhendro is a fierce man. You are not his match. But don't lose heart. I'll show you a way out. When you go to the woods, he'll be slumbering. You can't kill him while he is asleep. You must wake him in order to slay him. Prepare some *churmu* from a mound of flour. Feed your enemy with balls of *churmu* while he is slumbering. On waking up startled and confused, he will try to get away. Be alert to make the most of this opportunity.'

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Bhemo, the Pandav prince, set off to get the head of Jhalo Jhendro. Hurriedly, he walked along the way. He reached the forest. He looked for Jhalo Jhendro. Bhemo saw him lying amidst a thicket of *karmadi*. His snores sounded like cascading water. Bhemo pondered for a while, 'He is fast asleep. I must act fast.' Bhemo started thrusting the *churmu* balls into Jhalo Jhendro's slightly open mouth. When his enemy did not buzz, he poured some water on him. A startled Jhalo Jhendro sprang to his feet. He glimpsed Bhemo looming over him. Jhalo Jhendro turned on his heels and fled deep into the forest. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Bhemo, the Pandav prince followed him with quick steps. *Khama!*

Jhalo Jhendro fled to save his life.

He fled to save his life.

He ran towards the dense forest.

Bhemo followed Jhalo Jhendro with quick steps.

He followed Jhalo Jhendro with quick steps.

Bhemo pursued him closely.

Jhalo Jhendro tried to hide behind a tree.

He tried to hide behind a tree.

But Bhemo followed him closely.





Jhalo Jhendro ran for his life.
 He ran for his life.
 He tried to give Bhemo the slip.

Bhemo was getting tired and drained.
 He was getting tired and drained.
 Exhausted, he pleaded to the Gods.

Bhemo pierced his little finger.
 He pierced his little finger.
 He sprinkled the blood all around him.

From each drop of blood an image of Bhemo rose.
 From each drop of blood an image of Bhemo rose.
 Jhalo Jhendro was surrounded by hundreds of Bhemo.

From each tree he found a Bhemo staring at him.
 From each tree he found a Bhemo staring at him.
 A dumbstruck Jhalo Jhendro couldn't decide which
 way to go.

Bhemo took out his potent dagger.
 He took out his potent dagger.
 Holding high the dagger he stepped forward.

Bhemo struck hard his dagger.
 He struck hard his dagger.
 He hacked his enemy's neck with the sharp-edged weapon.

Holding the head in his hand,
 Holding the head in his hand,
 Bhemo took the road to Asanapari.





(Tambur) O maharaj!

Bhemo tried to choke Jhalo Jhendro by thrusting the churmu into his mouth. He poured some water into his throat. A startled Jhalo Jhendro opened his eyes. He glimpsed Bhemo looming over him. He was scared to death. He ran towards the dense forest. He fled for his life. Bhemo followed him into the deep woods. He gave Jhalo Jhendro a long chase. The forest was bustling with activity. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Jhalo Jhendro ran from tree to tree. He tried to give Bhemo the slip. But Bhemo followed him closely. He pursued Jhalo Jhendro for a long time. He felt tired and drained. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* A fatigued Bhemo pondered for a while, 'It is difficult to catch him in the forest. My knees have become watery. I can't let him get away.' Bhemo invoked the guardian deity of his family. He prayed to his guru. He recalled his ancestors' names. He pleaded them to give him strength. He pierced his little finger with a dagger. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Bhemo invoked the guardian deity of his family. 'O deity, my parents have worshipped you all their lives,' he pleaded, 'Be on my side. Give me strength to overcome my enemy.' He then pierced his little finger and sprinkled blood in all directions. From each drop of blood a Bhemo arose. *Khama!* At every tree a Bhemo stood. At every turn a Bhemo stood blocking the way. A dumbfounded Jhalo Jhendro pondered for a while, 'I am surrounded by my enemy from all sides.' Holding high his potent dagger, Bhemo stepped forward. *Khama!* Bhemo pounced on his enemy with all his might. Soon they were entangled in a turbulent combat. So fiercely did they fight that they rose up to heaven and then fell back on the ground. Leaping to his feet, Bhemo held high his potent dagger. In one clean stroke he hacked Jhalo Jhendro's neck. With the head in his hand, Bhemo took the way to Asanapari. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Bhemo went straight to the dhuni in Asanapari. The guru said,





‘Bhemo has brought the head of Jhalo Jhendro, but we still need to get a few more items. There is no time for delay. Make haste and collect them at the earliest so that the yagna can be performed. Make haste and send a word to Shankhalia Danav.’³⁹

Inviting Gadhrovasi

‘Listen to what I say, O Pandav princes.

Listen to what I say.

Invite Kutma’s guru for the yagna,’ said Bala Harguru.

The Pandavs obtained the head of Jhalo Jhendro.

They obtained the head of Jhalo Jhendro.

They wanted to perform the yagna.

Bhemo set out to invite Gadhrovasi.

He set out to invite Gadhrovasi.

He vowed to bring Kutma’s guru to Asanapari.

With his potent dagger Bhemo left for the city of Zaravati.

With his potent dagger Bhemo left for the city of Zaravati.

To invite Gadhrovasi Bhemo took the way to Zaravati.

The dhuni of Kutma’s guru was at Zaravati.

The dhuni of Kutma’s guru was at Zaravati.

Bhemo trod along the path to Gadhrovasi’s dhuni.

Bhemo tore up the way to Zaravati.

He tore up the way to Zaravati.

He arrived at the guru’s dhuni.

Gadhrovasi was in deep slumber.

He was in deep slumber.

His snores sounded like cascading water.





Bhemo pondered for a while.

He pondered for a while.

‘How should I wake him up?’

‘Are you asleep or awake, O guru?’ shouted Bhemo.

‘Are you asleep or awake?’

Come out if you are not asleep.’

The guru awoke with a start.

He awoke with a start.

He emerged from his slumber.

‘Who is shouting so loudly?’ he asked.

‘Who is shouting so loudly?’

Why have you come at this hour?’

‘It is not a time to delay, O guru,’ said Bhemo.

‘It is not a time to delay.

We will be late for the holy rite.’

‘We want to perform a yagna, O guru.

We want to perform a yagna.

I’ve come to invite you for the yagna.’

‘For the sake of Pandu’s soul,

For the sake of Pandu’s soul,

We need to perform a yagna.’

On hearing the purpose of Bhemo’s visit,

On hearing the purpose of Bhemo’s visit,

Gadhrovasi agreed to accompany him.

Bhemo led the guru with respect.

He led the guru with respect.





With reverence he brought him to Asanapari.

They arrived in Asanapari.

They arrived in Asanapari.

Kutma ceremoniously welcomed her guru.

Kutma prostrated at his feet.

She prostrated at his feet.

She respectfully bowed to him.

Sadev set out for Lanka Gadh.

He set out for Lanka Gadh.

He set out to fetch shiya grass.

He returned with shiya grass.

He returned with shiya grass.

From Lanka Gadh he brought the shiya grass without knots.

The Pandav brothers gathered all the items.

The Pandav brothers gathered all the items.

They obtained milk of a white cow.

The guru asked them to get leaves of a pipal tree.

He asked them to get leaves of a pipal tree.

The Pandav princes brought the leaves for the yagna.⁴⁰

The Pandav princes prepared to perform the yagna.

They prepared to perform the yagna.

They collected all the items for consummating the yagna.

Kasna Avtar and Kutma sat on one side of the samadhi.

They sat on one side of the samadhi.

On the other side sat Dhofa and other relatives.





Sadev sang the bhajans of Hansdev.⁴¹
He sang bhajans of Hansdev.
The Pandav brothers sang after him.

Bala Harguru performed the rites.
He performed the rites.
He asked for shiya grass without knots.

He knitted it into a grass ladder.⁴²
He knitted it into a grass ladder.
He started chanting the *mantra* at the samadhi.

Bala Harguru sang bhajans.
He sang bhajans.
Gadhrovasi repeated after him as an accompanist.

The Pandavs performed the final rite for their father.
They performed the final rite for their father.
The final rites for Pandu, the king, were performed.

The yagna was accomplished.
The yagna was accomplished.
The soul of Pandu was set at rest.

The Pandav brothers went to seek the blessings of Pipal Rishi.
They went to get the blessings of Pipal Rishi.
They pleaded for his blessings.

The final rite was accomplished.
The final rite was accomplished.
Bala Harguru addressed the soul of Pandu.

‘O liberated soul, now depart for Amrapuri,’ said the guru.
‘O liberated soul, now depart for Amrapuri.’





May Amrapuri be your resting place.'

Life is short but the tale never ends.

Life is short but the tale never ends.

The Pandav princes have made their names immortal.

ଉତ୍ତର

Bhasha





BHEMJHAL

(Tambur) O maharaj!

One fine day an incident took place which turned out to be very auspicious. Bhemo spread a black quilt on the floor and emptied a jar of gram onto it. He tied some of the gram in a square piece of cloth. He went to Kutma's palace and said, 'I am taking the cattle to graze.' He rounded up the cattle. With a long staff and the bundle of gram, he drove the herd to the outskirts of Asanapari. May you be well O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends. *Khama!*

Bhemo picked a long wooden staff.

He picked a long wooden staff.

He set out with his herd of cattle.

Munching the grains of gram,

Munching the grains of gram,

He drove his herd to the outskirts.

Bhemo led the herd to the ocean.

He led the herd to the ocean.

He prodded the cattle to walk up to the ocean.

Bhemo left behind the ocean and reached a lake.





He left behind the ocean and reached a lake.
Leisurely, he strolled around the lake.

Bhemo caught sight of Karmo, the washerman.
He caught sight of Karmo, the washerman.
Karmo was in the employ of the Kauravs.

Karmo was washing the clothes of the Kauravs.
He was washing the clothes of the Kauravs.
At the bank of the lake he was washing their clothes.

Bhemo sat beside the washerman.
He sat beside the washerman.
He munched gram sitting by the lake.

A young son of the washerman,
A young son of the washerman,
He stared at Bhemo with interest.

(An accompanist: He observed Bhemo eating gram. The lead singer: *Khama!*)

The child fancied some gram.
He fancied some gram.
He asked his father to get him some.

‘Listen to what I say, O brother,’ said the washerman.
‘Listen to what I say.
Please give some grains of gram to my boy.’

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Bhemo munched gram before the washerman and his child. The child asked for some. He cried for grains of gram. ‘Please give some





gram to my child, O Bhemo,' requested Karmo, the washerman. 'Gram is very cheap these days. You get a mound of it for a trivial price. Why don't you buy some for your child in the market?' said Bhemo. Karmo said, 'Keep an eye on my child and take care of my clothes. I'll go and get some gram for my son.'

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Karmo, the washerman, left for the marketplace. Bhemo held the child by the legs and dashed him on a slab of stone. He flung the body of the child into the water. Crocodiles and fish feasted on the corpse of the child. Bhemo lifted the bundle of clothes and left.

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Bhemo walked for some time and opened the bundle. He took out the dhotis of the Kaurav princes. He tore them from length to length and wrapped them around his legs as bandages. He picked up a broken stick and limping and hobbling, wandered through the lanes and alleyways. Amazed, people asked him how he had been crippled. 'I have developed suppurating sores. They cause me acute pain,' said Bhemo. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Bhemo, the Pandav prince, went limping and hobbling. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

Limping and hobbling, Bhemo wandered around the lake.
Limping and hobbling, Bhemo wandered around the lake.
He strolled around leisurely.

Bhemo reached a banyan tree called Sindur.
He reached a banyan tree called Sindur.
He stood by the Sindur banyan.

He gazed at the canopy of the banyan tree.
He gazed at the canopy of the banyan tree.
He caught sight of the seventy-eight Kaurav princes.





He saw sling bags full of rice hanging from the branches.
 He saw sling bags full of rice hanging from the branches.
 The rice of Nakro hung from the branches.

Bhemo pondered for a while.
 He pondered for a while.
 'These seem to be Nakro's bags of rice.'

From underneath the banyan tree shouted Bhemo,
 From underneath the banyan tree shouted Bhemo,
 Standing under the tree, Bhemo shouted to the Kauravs.

'Listen to what I say, O brothers,' said he.
 'Listen to what I say.
 Whose sling bags are these?'

'Do you want to know whose sling bags are these?
 Do you want to know whose sling bags are these?
 Listen carefully to what we say,' said the Kaurav princes.

'Everyday Nakro comes to play a game of chopat with us.
 Everyday Nakro comes to play a game of chopat with us.
 And everyday he loses the game to us,' said the
 Kaurav princes.

'Since he loses the game he cannot eat his rice.
 Since he loses the game he cannot eat his rice.
 Each day he leaves behind a bag of rice.'

Enraged, Bhemo uprooted several thorny bushes.
 Enraged, Bhemo uprooted several thorny bushes.
 He spread them under the banyan tree.





(Tambur) O maharaj!

Bhemo said to the Kauravs, 'Listen to what I say. Whose bags of rice are hanging from the tree and for whom are you waiting?' 'These bags belong to Nakro. Each day he comes here to play a game of chopat with us. And each day he loses the game to us. Crestfallen, Nakro leaves without eating his rice. That is why so many bags of rice hang from the tree.' *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Bhemo pondered for a while, 'That's why Nakro has taken ill. I must teach my cousins a lesson.' *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Bhemo uprooted some thorny bushes and laid them under the banyan tree. He held the trunk of the banyan and shook it violently. The Kaurav princes fell like ripe fruits. Entangled in the thorny bushes, they struggled to get free. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* May you be well, *O honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

Bhemo, the Pandav prince, tore up the path.

He tore up the path.

He took the way to Dhavlo Gadh.

Bhemo wandered through the lanes of Dhavlo Gadh.

He wandered through the lanes of Dhavlo Gadh.

He arrived at the shop of a miller.

'Listen to what I say, O miller,' said Bhemo.

'Listen to what I say.

Give me some lumps of *kachriyu*.'

(Tambur) O maharaj!

'Listen to what I say, O miller,' said Bhemo, 'Give me some lumps of *kachriyu* as my stomach feels empty.' The miller replied, 'I am not here to serve you. I am a miller of the Kaurav king.' Bhemo insisted





on getting some kachriyu. The miller felt annoyed and said, 'Will you go away or shall I wield my stick?'

'Listen to what I say, O Bhemo,' said the miller.

'Listen to what I say.

I press the seeds for the Kaurav king.'

Bhemo persisted on having some kachriyu,

He persisted on having some kachriyu.

He nagged the miller to give some to him.

'Better go away from here, O Bhemo,' said the miller.

'Better go away from here.

Don't compel me to wield my stick.'

Infuriated, Bhemo heaved the miller high.

Infuriated, Bhemo heaved the miller high.

He flung the miller away like a piece of stone.

Twelve miles afar was the miller hurled.

Twelve miles afar was he hurled.

Bhemo picked up lumps of kachriyu and ate.

Bhemo ate to his heart's content.

He ate to his heart's content.

He ate kachriyu made of crushed sesame seeds.

Bhemo left the marketplace.

He left the marketplace.

He walked through the alleyways.

Bhemo caught sight of the royal carriage.

He caught sight of the royal carriage.

He followed the carriage to the palace.





Gatarpa, the queen mother, got into it.
Gatarpa, the queen mother, got into it.
Bhemo saw Gatarpa stepping into the carriage.

‘Listen to what I say, O mother,’ said Bhemo.
‘Listen to what I say.
Where are you heading?’

‘I’m going to the Sindur banyan, O son,’ said Gatarpa.
‘I’m going to the Sindur banyan.
I’m taking a meal for my sons.’

‘Would you take me along, O mother?’ asked Bhemo.
‘Would you take me along?
I am also heading for the banyan tree.’

(Tambur) O maharaj!

They set out for the outskirts. At the Sindur banyan they got down from the carriage. The queen mother found her sons entangled in thorny bushes. Bruised and battered, they struggled to get free. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* ‘Who has beaten and battered you? Who has made you bleed?’ lamented Gatarpa. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* ‘The east wind blew so hard, O mother, the trees swayed and swung violently. My cousins could not hold tight enough and fell off the banyan tree.’ Pitying the plight of his cousins, Bhemo walked away. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Gatarpa removed the entwined thorns. She nursed the wounds of her sons. Sighing and shouting with pain, the Kaurav princes got into the carriage. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Life is short but the tale never ends. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Kabiro,⁴³ the Kaurav prince, pondered for a while, ‘Bhemo made us fall like ripe fruits. We fell on the thorny bushes and bled helplessly. I vow revenge. I’ll make him pay.’ Kabiro





took a vow in the name of the guardian deity of his family. ‘O Goddess Kumbhi!’ he prayed, ‘Be by my side. My ancestors have worshipped you day and night. Until now, we used to offer you a healthy goat. However, if you grant my wish today, I promise to make a human sacrifice. If you fulfil my wish, I’ll offer you the heads of the five Pandav princes.’ Draping a black quilt on his shoulder, Kabirot set off for Asanapari. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* The Kaurav prince arrived in Asanapari. He wandered through the lanes and alleyways. He sneaked into the court of the Pandavs. He found only four Pandav brothers in court. Bhemo had gone to graze the cattle by the lake. Kabirot seized the opportunity. He crept up to the princes and tied up their hands and legs. He caught hold of Kutma and tied her too. He spread his quilt on the floor and tied the Pandav family in a bundle. Lifting them aloft, Kabirot returned to Dhavlo Gad. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends. *Khama!*

Carrying aloft the bundle, Kabirot tore along the way.
Carrying aloft the bundle, Kabirot tore along the way.
Hurriedly, he walked towards Dhavlo Gad.

Kabirot arrived at the shrine of Goddess Kumbhi.
He arrived at the shrine of Goddess Kumbhi.
At the shrine of the guardian deity he came.

Kabirot laid the bundle before the deity.
He laid the bundle before the deity.
At the shrine he untied it.

Kabirot hauled the Pandav princes out.
He hauled the Pandav princes out.
He dragged the Pandavs out of the bundle.





(Tambur) O maharaj!

Kabiro, the Kaurav prince, tied the Pandavs and their mother in a bundle. He brought the bundle to the shrine of Goddess Kumbhi. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Bhemo returned to Asanapari. He found the royal assembly empty. Hurriedly, he went to the palace of the clouds. He looked all around for his brothers. He pondered for a while, 'My brothers may have gone on an expedition but I can't see my mother.' He shouted for Kutma. Annoyed, Bhemo moved from palace to palace. Over and again he went to check the assembly. He could not see his family. Bhemo became apprehensive. He strained his eyes for footprints. He saw the footprints of the enemy. Bhemo pondered for a while, 'This is the trail of a Kaurav prince. He must have captured my brothers.' Bhemo followed the trail. It led him to Dhavlo Gadh. Bhemo set out to rescue his brothers. May you be well, *O honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends. *Khama!*

Bhemo followed the trail of the Kaurav prince.

He followed the trail of the Kaurav prince.

He went after his enemy.

Bhemo walked towards Dhavlo Gadh.

He walked towards Dhavlo Gadh.

Hurriedly, he followed Kabiro.

Bhemo arrived at the Sindur banyan tree.

He arrived at the Sindur banyan tree.

He heard a jingling sound.

The air was thick with the sound of jingling bells.

The air was thick with the sound of jingling bells.

Jingling of the little bells filled the air.

On a swinging board swung Hedamba.





On a swinging board swung Hedamba.
Little bells hanging from her swing made sweet sounds.

Hedamba caught sight of Bhemjhal, the Pandav.
She caught sight of Bhemjhal, the Pandav prince.
In a soft voice she spoke to him.

'Who are you, O stranger, walking away in such haste?
Who are you, O stranger, walking away in such haste?
Slow down a bit and speak to me,' said she.

'Pay a toll before you move forward.
Pay a toll before you move forward.
You can't go ahead without paying the toll.'

'Who are you to ask for a toll?' said Bhemo.
'Who are you to ask for a toll?
How dare you demand tax from me?'

Jeevta! Bhalai!

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Bhemo followed the trail of the Kaurav prince. Hurriedly, he set off to rescue his family. He charged up the way in great haste. He arrived at the Sindur banyan tree. He heard the sounds of little bells. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* The air was thick with the jingling of bells. A curious Bhemo walked towards the banyan tree. He found Hedamba swinging on a board. The bells strung on her board jingled as she swung. 'Come closer, O stranger,' said Hedamba, 'You can't go past this spot unless you pay a toll.' 'I am Bhemo, a Pandav prince, but who are you to demand a tax? Can't you see I am in haste?' said Bhemo. *Khama! Khama!*





(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! 'I can't hang on here. If you insist, I'll pay it to you on my return,' said Bhemo. 'Pay you must the tax, or I'll curse you and you'll fail to accomplish your task.' Bhemo pondered for a while. He stared at Hedamba and said, 'I left my house in haste. I don't have a single paisa to pay you.' 'You have to pay in cash or kind. If you don't have the money then rock my swing back and forth for some time.' (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Bhemo rocked the swing with such force that it oscillated between sky and earth. Up Hedamba went and landed in the chariot of the Sun God. Hedamba's heart missed a beat. 'O! This could be my final moment!' she mused. *Khama!*

'Listen to what I say, O mighty Bhemo,' pleaded she.

'Listen to what I say.

You'll be blamed if I die.'

'I've landed in the chariot of the Sun God.

I've landed in the chariot of the Sun God.

I'll certainly die if I tumble over.'

(An accompanist: Look at her, Bhemo. The lead singer: *Khama!*)

'Hold me as I swing back, O Bhemjhal,' cried she.

'Hold me as I swing back.

You'll be blamed if I die.'

Bhemo looked up at Hedamba.

He looked up at Hedamba.

She was smitten by the charms of the Pandav prince.

Bhemo stared at her so intently,

He stared at her so intently,

His gaze penetrated through her womb.

Bhemo held the swing as it swayed down.





Bhemo held the swing as it swayed down.
Bringing the swing to a halt, he left.

With long strides and short steps he walked.
With long strides and short steps he walked.
Hurriedly, he tore up the way to Dhavlo Gadh.

‘Take me along with you, O father,’ said someone.
‘Take me along with you.
Don’t leave me behind like this.’

‘Slow down a bit, let me catch up.
Slow down a bit, let me catch up.
Take me along, O father.’

Shouting his name, Gharino Ghatukaro⁴⁴ ran after Bhemo.
Shouting his name, Gharino Ghatukaro ran after Bhemo.
With hasty steps he followed Bhemo.

Bhemo pondered for a while.
He pondered for a while.
‘Who’s trying to stop me by calling me his father?’

‘I am sworn by a binding oath not to halt or turn back.
I am sworn by a binding oath not to halt or turn back.
But I’ll let him catch up with me,’ thought Bhemo.

Bhemo slowed his pace.
He slowed his pace.
Gharino Ghatukaro drew near and stood by him.

Gharino Ghatukaro held his hand and said,
He held his hand and said,
‘O father, listen to what I say.’





‘Take me with you, O father,’ said Gharino Ghatukaro.

‘Take me with you.

I wish to accompany you.’

‘Who are you to call me your father?’ asked Bhemo.

‘Who are you to call me your father?’

O child, whose son are you?’

‘Your son I am, O father,’ said Gharino Ghatukaro.

‘Your son I am.

Let me come with you.’

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Bhemjhal, the Pandav prince, looked at Hedamba. He stared at her so intently that his gaze penetrated deep inside her. Bhemo swung her high on the swing and went on to rescue his family. After a while Hedamba came down the swing and gave birth to his child. She named him Gharino Ghatukaro. ‘Whose son am I, O mother? Tell me the name of my father,’ said the child. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Pointing to Bhemo’s back, Hedamba said, ‘That man walking away from us is your father.’ Gharino Ghatukaro stared at the back of Bhemo and called out to him. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Bhemo had sworn a binding oath never to halt or turn back. He slowed his pace. He was baffled to see a child claiming to be his son. Gharino Ghatukaro caught up with him. Holding his hand, he stood beside Bhemo. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! ‘Take me along with you, father,’ said Gharino Ghatukaro. ‘Why do you call me father? Whose son are you? I don’t have any children. And I do not wish to call you my son.’ ‘Father, I am your son. A few moments back, I was born to Hedamba. Your gaze penetrated deep inside my mother and I was conceived. I am your heir. I want to come with you.’ *Khama!*





(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* The son and father conversed. Bhemo held him by the hand and resumed his journey to Dhavlo Gadh. 'Listen to what I say, O son,' said Bhemo, 'A Kaurav prince has kidnapped my brothers and mother. I am on my way to rescue them. On my way I met your mother. But when I fight with the enemy on whose side will you be?' 'It is a difficult choice. On one side is my parent and on the other are my uncles,' mused the son of Bhemo. He said aloud, 'I'll fight for the losing side.' *Khama!*

Bhemo pondered for a while.

He pondered for a while.

'This son of mine may go against me.'

Bhemo struck his foot hard on the ground.

He struck his foot hard on the ground.

He struck the ground with his left foot.

Earth gave way and opened her surface.

Earth gave way and opened her surface.

Bhemo held his son by the tuft of his hair and
thrust him down.

Up to the seventh sphere of paataal,

Up to the seventh sphere of paataal,

Bhemo pushed Gharino Ghatukaro down.

Bhemo tore along to Dhavlo Gadh.

He tore along to Dhavlo Gadh.

He wandered through the lanes and alleyways.

To the royal assembly of the Kauravs he went.

To the royal assembly of the Kauravs he went.

In search of his family, Bhemo sneaked into the assembly.





Bhemo roamed in the marketplace.

He roamed in the marketplace.

He went to the cloud-capped palaces in search of his family.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Bhemo said to his son, 'Which side will you favour?' 'I'll fight for the losing side,' said Gharino Ghatukaro. 'If I succeed in the combat, he may take my enemy's side,' thought Bhemo. 'My son will fight against me. He is my flesh and blood. He is bound to be strapping and sturdy. He'll prove my peer in strength. Ill will be done in the world.' Bhemo forcefully struck his left foot on the ground. The earth gave way. Bhemo held his son by a tuft of his hair and pushed him into the split. He pressed him down to the seventh sphere of the netherworld. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Bhemo resumed his journey to Dhavlo Gadh. He wandered through the lanes and alleyways of the city. He sneaked into the royal court of the Kaurav princes. He moved from palace to palace in search of his brothers. But he could not find them.

(Tambur) O maharaj! At the shrine of the Goddess Kumbhi, Kabiرو pleaded with the deity. 'O Goddess, I've fulfilled my vow. Here I am with four Pandav princes and their mother. Accept them as offering.' Bhemo was desperate to find his brothers. He moved from place to place, looking for them. He arrived at the outskirts of the city. He caught sight of the shrine. Kabiرو was performing an aarti. Bhemo heard the sound. He ventured close to look inside. He caught sight of his brothers and Kutma. Kabiرو sprinkled some water on his captives. He was performing rites to offer a sacrifice. Kutma prayed to the Lord, 'Wake up my mighty Bhemo from his slumber, O Lord. Only Bhemo can save our lives.'

(Tambur) O maharaj! The Pandav princes lay helpless. Bhemo stealthily entered the shrine. He hid behind the idol of Goddess





Kumbhi. Enraged, Bhemo held the idol in his hands and tried to crush it. The Goddess felt excruciating pain. Tears streamed down her eyes. A baffled Kabiro said, ‘O Goddess, I have fulfilled my vow and am about to offer you a human sacrifice. Pray, why do you look displeased? Have I offended you in any way?’ Hiding behind the idol, Bhemo replied, ‘O Kaurav prince, can’t you see I have been hungry for twelve years. I won’t accept a human sacrifice. Satisfy my hunger by offering me *prasad* clean and pure.’ *Khama! Jeeva!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* ‘O Kabiro, satisfy my hunger with clean *prasad*. Make *laddus* of *churmu* from twelve seers of flour for me,’ said Bhemo. Kabiro went to the marketplace. He asked the sweet-vendor to make *laddus* of *churmu* from twelve seers of flour. The sweet vendor made *laddus* of *churmu* from the best flour, jaggery and ghee. Kabiro returned to the shrine with the *prasad* of *churmu*. *Khama!*

Kabiro returned to the shrine.

He returned to the shrine.

He arrived with salvers piled with *laddus*.

Kabiro placed the *prasad* before the idol.

He placed the *prasad* before the idol.

‘Listen to me, O guardian deity of my ancestors,’ said he.

Kabiro picked up a *laddu* from the salver.

He picked up a *laddu* from the salver.

And held it out to the idol.

Hiding behind the idol, Bhemo took the offering from his hand.

Hiding behind the idol, Bhemo took the offering
from his hand.

One after the other, all the *laddus* vanished in
Bhemo’s belly.





Bhemo squeezed the idol once again.
He squeezed the idol once again.
The deity shed tears of pain.

‘Listen to what I say, O Goddess,’ said Kabi-ro.
‘Listen to what I say.
I have complied with what you said.’

‘Did I make any mistake that you cry again?
Did I make any mistake that you cry again?
Why do you shed tears, O Goddess?’

Bhemo spoke from behind the idol.
He spoke from behind the idol.
‘Listen to what I say, O Kaurav prince.’

‘Bring twelve pots of water for me, O Kaurav prince.
Bring twelve pots of water for me.
For twelve long years I have been thirsty.’

Twelve pots of water were brought in.
Twelve pots of water were brought in.
Twelve pots of water were offered to the deity.

Jeevta! Bhalai!

(Tambur) O maharaj!

After devouring laddus made from twelve seers of flour, Bhemo squeezed the idol with all his might. Tears streamed down the eyes of the Goddess. ‘Why do you cry again, O Goddess,’ asked Kabi-ro, ‘Did I offend you in any way?’ Bhemo replied, ‘I have not drunk a drop of water for twelve years. Fetch twelve pots of water to slake my thirst.’ Kabi-ro fetched water for the Goddess. ‘Once the deity’s thirst





is quenched, I'll offer her the heads of the Pandavs,' thought he. Bhemo gulped the water and wiped his moustache clean. He emerged from behind the idol and pounced on Kabiro. Soon they closed in on each other like angry bulls. Kicking, pushing and wrestling, they beat one another. The other Pandav brothers helplessly watched them fight. The fighters were evenly matched. The word spread faster than fire. People of Dhavlo Gadh amassed at the shrine to watch.

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! When two mighty bulls lock horns in a fight, many a small plant and tree get trampled. Bhemo lifted Kabiro and hurled him in the air. Kabiro fell twenty-four furlongs away. But in no time he was back to fight. The rivals tried to beat each other using various strategies. Bhemo's strength started to ebb. 'I devoured laddus made of twelve seers of flour but I feel famished once again,' thought he. He looked at his mother. Kutma pondered for a while, 'Bhemo seems to be hungry. He has relented a bit. I must do something to fill his belly, or he'll be defeated and killed.' *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Kutma signalled to her son. She pointed at her feet and made a sign at Bhemo. She hinted that Bhemo make small heaps of dust. Bhemo took the cue and caused a few small heaps of dust. Kutma pressed her breasts and streaks of milk oozed out. She dropped the milk on each heap and they turned into sweetmeats. Using one arm against his rival, Bhemo picked the sweets with the other. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

Bhemo and Kabiro were locked in a duel.
 Bhemo and Kabiro were locked in a duel.
 They were equally matched.

Bhemo's strength was replenished.
 His strength was replenished.





He became invincible.

Bhemo tore his rival apart from limb to limb.

He tore his rival apart from limb to limb.

And flung each part in opposite directions.

But both parts came together.

Both parts came together.

Kabiro became one again.

Several times Bhemo tore his limbs.

Several times Bhemo tore his limbs.

But they would join again.

A baffled Bhemo looked at his mother.

A baffled Bhemo looked at his mother.

His mother spoke to him.

‘Listen to what I say, O Bhemo.

Listen to what I say.

Do you see that hetri tree?’

‘Tear your enemy from limb to limb.

Tear you enemy from limb to limb.

And then tear apart a hetri leaf.’

Bhemo followed his mother’s instruction.

He followed his mother’s instruction.

He tore a hetri leaf before his enemy’s limbs became one.

As Bhemo tore the leaf,

As he tore the leaf,

Lifeless became the limbs of his enemy.



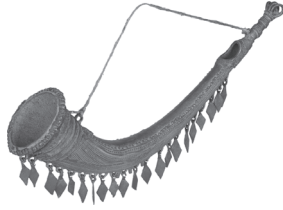


(Tambur) O maharaj!

Bhemo and Kabiro were locked in a fierce duel. People of Dhavlo Gadh flocked out of their homes to watch them. They matched each other in strength. After eating the sweetmeats, Bhemo felt reinvigorated. Mustering all his strength, he made a dash at his opponent. He pinned Kabiro down under his thigh. Holding Kabiro's leg in his hand, Bhemo tore him apart limb by limb. He flung one part in the east and the other in the west. But the parts united again. Kabiro started to fight back. Several times Bhemo tore apart his enemy's body. But each time it became whole again. Bhemo pondered for a while, 'If this continues any longer, I will again feel tired and hungry.' Kutma said to him, 'Do you see that hetri tree, son? Tear apart the body of your enemy and before it becomes whole, pluck a leaf of the hetri tree and tear it into two. Crossing your hands, throw them in opposite directions and your enemy will die.' *(Tambur) O maharaj!* After slashing Kabiro's body, Bhemo ran towards the tree. Quickly, he plucked a leaf and tore it into two. Crossing his hands, Bhemo flung one part to the east and the other to the west. Kabiro's body could not join together and his body became lifeless. *Khama!*

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KASNA AVTAR IN THE LAND OF THE DANAVS

One fine day an incident took place.
One fine day an incident took place.
It turned out to be very auspicious.

Narad, the wandering monk, said to Avtar,
Narad, the wandering monk, said to Avtar,
'Listen to what I say, O Lord.'

'How large is your kingdom, O Lord?
How large is your kingdom?
How many continents come under your reign?'

Kasna Avtar said to Narad,
He said to Narad,
'Listen to what I say.'

'Let's not talk about my sovereignty, O Narad.
Let's not talk about my sovereignty.
Many issues ensue from such debates.'

Narad nagged Avtar persistently.
He nagged Avtar persistently.
He was curious to know.





Avtar tried to dissuade Narad.
He tried to dissuade Narad.
But Narad was adamant.

Avtar gave in.
Avtar gave in.
'I administer three continents,' said he.

'Who rules over the fourth continent?' asked Narad.
'Who rules over the fourth continent?
Who is the ruler of the fourth one?'

'The *danavs* are the sovereigns of the fourth continent,' said Avtar.
'The danavs are the sovereigns of the fourth continent.
The danavs rule over that part of the world.'

Jeevta! Bhalai!

(Tambur) O maharaj!

On a very auspicious day, a narrator narrates the story and the entire court listens to him intently. This incident occurred during satyug but is being narrated in the period of kaliyug. This is a tale of the exploits of brave and righteous people. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* One day an incident occurred which turned out to be auspicious. Narad said to Kasma Avtar, 'Over how many continents do you rule?' 'I am the sovereign of three continents. But why do you ask such questions? Why are you curious?' replied Avtar. 'Where is this fourth continent, O Lord? Who is its ruler?' asked Narad. 'The fourth continent is situated in the north. It is under the rule of the danavs,' said Kasma Avtar. 'Let us visit that far off land, O Lord. Let us go to the north,' said Narad. 'Do not even mention its name. Ill will be done in the world,' replied Avtar.





(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Narad nagged Kasna Avtar to tell him more about the fourth continent. 'Why do you want to risk your life?' said Avtar, 'It is a perilous land.' 'Someday or the other you will have to face this peril. What difference will it make if we visit it today?' insisted Narad. Avtar gave in. 'You are so adamant, O Narad!' said he. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Narad and Kasna Avtar set out to assess the territory of the danavs. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

Kasna Avtar and Narad went along to Uttarakhand.

They went along to Uttarakhand.

Chatting and talking, they walked towards Uttarakhand.

They surveyed the land of the danavs.

They surveyed the land of the danavs.

Standing on the borders, they assessed the territory of the danavs.

'We are at the edge of the land of the danavs, O Narad.

We are at the edge of the land of the danavs.

Yonder is the land of the danavs,' said Kasna Avtar.

'If they notice us here,

If they notice us here,

They'll certainly kill us.'

(An accompanist: It is a weird place. The lead singer: *Khama*!)

Suddenly, the danav land was bustling.

The danav land was bustling.

Kasna Avtar became alert.

'Listen to what I say, O Narad,' said Avtar.

'Listen to what I say.





The guards on vigil are coming this way.'

'We are in trouble, O Narad.

We are in trouble.

They are sure to kill us.'

Before Avtar could go away,

Before Avtar could go away,

The guards arrived on the border of their kingdom.

Howling and bellowing they came.

Howling and bellowing they came.

They caught sight of Avtar and his companion.

The guards siezed the intruders.

They siezed the intruders.

They captured Avtar and Narad.

The guards tied them to the tails of their horses.

They tied them to the tails of their horses.

They made Avtar captive.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

'We'd better run away from here, O Narad, the demon guards are coming this way,' said Kasna Avtar. 'If they catch us, they'll tie us to their horse tails and drag us.' Before they could retrace their steps, the guards arrived at the border. The place was bustling. Riding on their swift horses, the guards headed for the intruders. Kasna Avtar said, 'O Narad, we were wrong. Run for your life or you are doomed.' *Khama! Jeevta!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Kasna Avtar and Narad tried to flee. But they were besieged from all sides. Trotting on their horses, the danavs





closed in. On catching the sight of Kasna Avtar, Bhenso, the danav chief bellowed, 'O! Our enemy has walked into a trap. Surround them on all sides. See that they do not get away.' (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The danavs ranged around. They dismounted and trailed long whips. They cracked their whips on their captives. Kasna Avtar and Narad shrieked with pain. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The danavs cracked whips at their captives. Kasna Avtar said, 'Didn't I caution you, O Narad? Now we are being beaten like beasts. We are lacerated. Ill has been done in the world.' (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The danav chief tied them to the tails of the horses and dragging Avtar and his companions, rode back to his kingdom. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends. *Khama!*

The danavs dragged their captives.

They dragged their captives.

They lugged them to Uttarakhand.

The danavs arrived in Uttarakhand.

They arrived in Uttarakhand.

Riding on their swift horses they arrived in Uttarakhand.

Bhenso, the chief spoke aloud.

He spoke aloud.

'O brothers, listen to what I say.'

'Go to the tanner's place, O brothers.

Go to the tanner's place.

There is no time for delay.'

'Fetch a tanned hide from him, O brothers.

Fetch a tanned hide from him.

Quickly bring a tanned hide from a tanner.'





Fifteen danavs in place of one,
Fifteen danavs in place of one,
Raced to fetch hide from a tanner.

Running through the lanes and alleyways,
Running through the lanes and the alleyways,
They brought a tanned hide.

The danavs tied Kasna Avtar and his companion.
They tied Kasna Avtar and his companion.
They bound them in the hide.

The danavs stitched the hide from all sides.
They stitched the hide from all sides.
They sewed the captives into the piece of skin.

The danavs flung the hide by a dunghill.
They flung the hide by a dunghill.
They left their enemies to rot at the dunghill.

Kasna Avtar and Narad lamented their plight.
They lamented their plight.
Stitched inside the hide they bemoaned their plight.

Jeevta! Bhalai!

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Kasna Avtar and Narad were taken captive. The danav chief cracked whips on their backs and tied them to his horse's tail. They were dragged to the capital. The chief asked his men to bring a tanned hide. Avtar and Narad were sewn inside the animal skin. The danav chief asked his men to fling the hide on a dunghill at the outskirts.
(Tambur) O maharaj! Ill was done in the world. Avtar was left to his





fate at the outskirts. 'Our days are numbered, O Narad, no one will come to our rescue. We'll die of hunger.' Avtar and his companion spent the night in agony.

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The waking cock's crowing heralded the day. The first streak of light brightened the sky. A Brahman of Uttarakhand came to the outskirts for his morning ablution. With a pitcher of water he came to the dunghill.

Kasna Avtar said to Narad,
He said to Narad,
'Listen to what I say.'

'Ill has been done in the world, O Narad.
Ill has been done in the world.
We have been misunderstood in this land.'

'We came to find matches for our girls.
We came to find matches for our girls.
But the danavs mistook us as intruders.'

(An accompanist: Where are the brides? The lead singer:
Khama!)

'We thought of giving our daughters in marriage to the danavs.
We thought of giving our daughters in marriage
to the danavs.
But the danav chief stitched us inside this hide.'

'We came here to find grooms for our girls.
We came here to find grooms for our girls.
Now the danavs will die single.'

A Brahman heard them talk.





He heard them talk.

He stopped to eavesdrop.

‘The danavs are ignorant of our intention.

They are ignorant of our intention.

Ill has been done in the world,’ said Kasna Avtar.

The Brahman pondered for a while.

He pondered for a while.

He tore up the way to the court of the danavs.

(An accompanist: O Lord, we are ignorant of your ways. The lead singer: *Khama!*)

‘Listen to what I say, O Lords,’ said the Brahman.

‘Listen to what I say.

I implore you to listen to me.’

‘You mistook the captives as our enemies, O Lords!

You mistook the captives as our enemies.

They have come here for match-making.’

‘I heard them talk, O masters!

I heard them talk.

They are here to find grooms for their girls.’

‘They want to give their girls to us in marriage, O masters!

They want to give their girls to us in marriage.

But you stitched them inside an animal skin.’

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Bhenso, the demon chief, summoned his men. ‘O brothers, rush to the outskirts. Release our captives from the hide and bring them to





me.’ (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Fifteen danavs in place of one ran towards the dunghill. *Khama!* Hurriedly, they ripped open the sewn skin. They pulled out Karna Avtar and his companion. The danavs led them to the court of their chief. The chief saw them coming. ‘There is no time to delay, O brothers,’ he said, ‘Heat water in a copper vessel. Help them have a bath.’ *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Karna Avtar and Narad were treated respectfully. They were taken to the cloud-capped palace. Water was heated in copper vessels. The danav helped them with their bath. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The attendants laid a silken mattress on a high couch. They sprinkled fragrant perfume on the mattress. They helped Karna Avtar and Narad to the couch. *Khama!* May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

Bhenso, the danav chief, spoke to Avtar.

He spoke to Avtar.

‘Listen to what I say.’

‘Forgive us for our mistake.

Forgive us for our mistake.

Tell us about the purpose of your visit.’

‘Listen to what I say, O danav chief,’ said Karna Avtar.

‘Listen to what I say.

I implore you to listen to me intently.’

(An accompanist: We’ve come to ask for the hands of the danav youths. The lead singer: *Khama!*)

‘We have come here with marriage proposals,’ said Avtar.

‘We have come here with marriage proposals.

We seek the hands of the danav youths.’





‘For our young girls,
For our young girls,
We seek suitable danav grooms.’

‘Pardon us for the blunder we made, O Kasma Avtar.
Pardon us for the blunder we made.
Let us bury our feud here and now,’ said the danav chief.

The danav chief honoured the wedding proposal.
He honoured the wedding proposal.
A ceremony was arranged on the eve of the full moon.

‘The eve of full moon is auspicious, O danav chief.
The eve of full moon is auspicious.
Perform the ceremony of *pithi* on that day,’ said Kasma Avtar.

‘Do me a small favour, O danav chief,
Do me a small favour.
Bring along all the danavs on that auspicious occasion.’

‘None should stay back at Uttarakhand, O danav chief.
None should stay back at Uttarakhand.
All the danavs should be our guests.’

(An accompanist: All the danavs should be present at
Vaikunthpuri. The lead singer: What you say is right. *Khama!*)

‘All of you should come to Vaikunthpuri.
All of you should come to Vaikunthpuri.
‘We invite you all to the wedding,’ said Kasma Avtar.

Kasma Avtar and Narad left for Vaikunthpuri.
They left for Vaikunthpuri.
Hurriedly, they tore up the way.





‘Listen to what I say, O Narad,’ said Avtar.

‘Listen to what I say.

I will work a miracle.’

‘I’ll teach them a lesson, O Narad.

I’ll teach them a lesson.

I’ll square the revenge.’

(Tambur) O maharaj!

‘There is no dearth of youthful girls in Vaikunthpuri. We have come to your land to seek a match for them. For each bachelor danav boy we have a virgin girl,’ said Kasna Avtar. The danav chief listened intently. All the danav youth were elated. They pondered for a while, ‘Soon we’ll have brides from Vaikunthpuri.’ *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! ‘The forthcoming full moon eve is very auspicious for such occasions. Arrange for the pithi ceremony on that day. And the following morning you should arrive in Vaikunthpuri,’ said Avtar. ‘Before we leave, I entreat you to do us a favour. No danav, male, young or old, should stay back in Uttarakhand. Everyone should come to participate in this auspicious occasion,’ added Avtar. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Avtar invited everyone to Vaikunthpuri. Then along with Narad he set out for his kingdom. ‘Did not I tell you not to mention the name of the land of the danav?’ said Kasna Avtar, ‘They are mean people. We would have died inside that hide. But now it is my turn to square the revenge.’ Avtar and Narad tore up the way to Vaikunthpuri. *Khama!* May you be well, *O honkaria.* Life is short but the tale never ends.

They took the way to Vaikunthpuri.

They took the way to Vaikunthpuri.

Avtar and Narad walked home.





Narad pondered for a while.
 He pondered for a while.
 'I can't comprehend the Lord's design.'

'From where shall he get so many maidens?
 From where shall he get so many maidens?
 Where are the girls of marriageable age?'

Avtar had a huge fort built near the town.
 He had a huge fort built near the town.
 A fort was built of stone and sand.

(An accompanist: What does our Lord have in mind? The lead singer: You said it well. *Khama!*)

A rampart was built of sand and stone.
 A rampart was built of sand and stone.
 A fort was constructed near Vaikunthpuri.

The auspicious day was approaching.
 The auspicious day was approaching.
 The danavs became eager and excited.

(An accompanist: The full moon night is not far. The lead singer: *Khama!*)

Kasna Avtar scared a few cats, vixens and bitches.
 He scared a few cats, vixens and bitches.
 The ceremony of pithi was performed on them.

(*Tambur*) O maharaj!

Kasna Avtar got a fort built at the outskirts of Vaikunthpuri. The fort was made of sand and stone. Avtar pondered for a while, 'The full moon night is fast approaching. From where shall I get girls of





marriageable age?’ He went out and scared a few cats, vixens and bitches. He rounded them to the fort of sand and stone. He asked the womenfolk to carry out the ceremony of pithi on them. (*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* Kasna Avtar selected the queerest brides for the danav boys. He scared a few cats, vixens and bitches as brides. The brides were given a ceremonial bath. They were led to the pithi ceremony. Womenfolk smeared the brides’ bodies with the fragrant paste of pithi. They sang the customary songs.

(*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* Vaikunthpuri was in a flurry of activity. The youth were busy buying combs. The lasses indulged in buying eye-salve. The widows eagerly purchased snuff powder. The elderly men ambled leisurely around the city, twirling their bushy moustaches. *Khama.* (*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* The people of Uttarakhand were overwhelmed. ‘Our relatives-in-law are generous. We should all go to attend the wedding ceremony. None should remain at home,’ they thought. Uttarakhand was bustling with activity. The danavs set out in a great procession. Puffs of clouds rose as they travelled along the way. The sounds of *shehnai* and drums were heard. The dancers danced joyfully. The entertainers delighted people with various skills. Musical instruments were played. O, what revelry! *Khama! Khama!* (*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* The danav grooms arrived in Vaikunthpuri. They were welcomed ceremonially. They were lodged under banyan and pipal trees.

(*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* At an auspicious hour, the grooms were called upon to honour the *toran*. *O maharaj!* The grooms arrived to honour the toran with swords in their hands. The womenfolk of Vaikunthpuri received them ceremoniously. O, much revelry went around. The womenfolk from the bride’s side sang *phatanas*.⁴⁵ They aimed banter at the danav women. They were called various names. They were called women with bulging bellies, ladies with crooked teeth and oversized abdomens. May you be well, *O honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.





(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The ceremony of pithi was performed on a weird group of brides. From the land of the danavs arrived the aspiring grooms. They were welcomed with much warmth. The grooms performed the toran ceremony. The women of Vaikunthpuri marked their foreheads with auspicious red marks. The grooms' companions adorned themselves in various ways. The danavs were invited to the fort of sand and stone. *Khama! Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Kasma Avtar invited his guests to the fort of sand and stone. He pointed at the group of brides and said, 'Come this way, O grooms from the land of the danavs and choose your brides.' The grooms were taken aback. They pondered for a while, 'But they are not human. How can we wed animals?' Kasma Avtar sneaked out of the fort, leaving his guests behind to ponder. He created a storm. On the horizon the clouds loomed large. Streaks of lightning danced across the sky. Suddenly, lightning and thunder struck the earth. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The Wind God was in spate. A gale storm struck the fort of sand and stone. The fort could not withstand the mighty blows of wind. It was reduced to a heap of dust. The danavs were buried underneath. The Rain God's wrath poured down relentlessly. Lightning struck the rubble of the fort. The danavs were burnt alive. *Khama!*

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IKO, THE DANAV PRINCE

Iko, the danav prince, went to the house of a carpenter.
He went to the house of the carpenter.
He called out his name.

‘Are you asleep or awake, O carpenter?’ asked he.
‘Are you asleep or awake?
Come out if you’re not asleep.’

‘I am not asleep, O brother,’ said the carpenter.
‘I am not asleep.
I was tossing and turning in bed.’

‘Why have you come at this hour, O brother?
Why have you come at this hour?
What has brought you here in the middle of the night?’

‘I’ll pay you a high price, O carpenter,’ said he.
I’ll pay you a high price.
Make a cage with a trap door for me.’

Jeevta! Bhalai!

The carpenter picked his tools.





He picked his tools.

He went to the glistening green garden.

The carpenter cut a sandal tree.

He cut a sandal tree.

He started making a cage with a trap door.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

The queen of Bhenso, the danav king, was with child. While the other danavs were burnt alive, she alone survived the catastrophe. The queen had ventured out of the fort of sand and stone. When all other danavs were buried under the fort she ran away for her life. Stealthily, she got out of Vaikunthpuri. She managed to get back to her kingdom. After some time she gave birth to a baby boy. The mother fondly named him Iko. She and her siblings fussed over him. *(Tambur)* Soon the child began to crawl. He toddled and tumbled as he grew. The prince started going to school. He started to see the world with his eyes. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* One day Iko came back from school. Straightaway, he went to his mother and asked, 'Why am I alone without a father, brother or any kith and kin? Have they all died? Why was I left alone in the world?' *Khama! Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! 'O mother, tell me, how did my family die?' His mother replied, 'O my son, that was indeed a trying time. We were struck by famine. All our kin and kith died in that famine.' But the danav prince was not to be fooled. 'All others survived the drought, only my father and his kin died? Do not thwart me, O mother, speak out and don't hide the truth from me.'

(Tambur) O maharaj! A willful and obstinate king and a child, both will have their own way. With tears in her eyes the mother opened her heart, 'O my son, you are a piece of my heart. You mean the





world to me. You have given me reason to live. With great difficulty I have nurtured you. Don't ruin my hopes by taking any hasty action. Don't be stubborn.' But Iko, the danav prince would not listen. He threatened that he would end his life. 'Listen to what I say, O son,' said the helpless mother, 'The dark-skinned Kasna Avatar should be condemned and cursed. He devised the death of our race. He invited us to his kingdom and had a fort of sand constructed. All our men were buried under the fort. All your uncles, aunts and even distant relatives, along with your father, were burnt alive in that fort of sand and stone. I had ventured out of the fort to answer the call of nature but everyone else in our clan was wiped out.'

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! Iko shuddered with anger. He shed tears of blood. With the fire of wrath flaming within his heart, he cried, 'O Kasna Avatar, I'll avenge my father's death! I'll slay the killer of my clan.' Iko tore up the house of Karmo the carpenter. 'Karmo, my brother,' said he, 'Wake up, if you're asleep. And come out if you're already up. There is no time for delay.' A startled Karmo jumped out of his bed and came out. 'What has brought you here at this early hour?' he asked. (*Tambur*) O maharaj! The danav prince said, 'Make a strong cage with a trap door. I'll pay you generously. Design the cage in such a way that not a drop of water, not even a strand of hair should pass through it.'

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! Karmo, the carpenter, was in dire need of money. He picked up his saw. Taking along his tools he went to the glistening green garden. He felled a huge sandal tree and sat down to make a cage for the danav prince. Iko followed him to the garden. He said, 'O carpenter, I consider you my brother. Make the cage of the size of Kasna Avatar. It shouldn't be too big or too small for him. And be sure that once shut, neither a drop of water nor a hair should penetrate it. Do not worry about the cost. I will make you a fitting payment.' The carpenter sat down to work. *Khama!*





Karmo sat down to work.
 He sat down to work.
 He sat down to make a cage for the danav prince.

Karmo made a cage from a sandal tree.
 He made a cage from a sandal tree.
 He made a cage with a trap door.

Karmo said to the danav prince,
 He said to the danav prince,
 'The cage is ready, O prince.'

Iko paid him generously.
 He paid him generously.
 He paid the carpenter a high price.

Iko travelled along the way with the cage.
 He travelled along the way with the cage.
 He set off for Vaikunthpuri.

Hurriedly, he tore up the way.
 Hurriedly, he tore up the way.
 He took the way to Vaikunthpuri.

Jeevta! Bhalai!

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Karmo examined the cage. 'Neither a drop of water nor even thin hair should penetrate it, otherwise the danav prince will not pay me a fitting price,' thought he. 'Here is the cage you asked for,' said Karmo, 'Check it for yourself, neither air nor water can break through its door.' Iko paid him a high price. Lifting the cage, he set out for Vaikunthpuri. *Khama!*





(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Iko, the danav prince, tore up the way to Vaikunthpuri. He pondered for a while, 'The carpenter has made an excellent cage. Neither a drop of water nor a strand of hair can penetrate in. Now I should make a plan to convince Kasna Avtar to enter this box. Once he gets in he won't be able to come out. My father's death will be avenged.' (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Avtar had a vision. He perceived Iko's thoughts. He pondered for a while, 'The danav prince is out to kill me. I'll have to work out something.' In the guise of an old brahman, Kasna Avtar set out to meet Iko on his way. He was disguised perfectly. He slipped into worn out footwear and took an almanac in his hand. Hobbling with an old walking stick, he chanced on the danav prince.

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Iko was lost in thought. He dreamt of killing Kasna Avtar. Avtar, in the guise of a brahman, met him on the way. He bowed low and greeted the prince, 'O stranger, you seem to be in a hurry. But tell me, from where do you come? Where are you heading?' 'I am taking this gift for my friend Kasna Avtar. We are old acquaintances. I had it made especially for him. He can recline and sleep in this cot. It is made of sandalwood. It is especially made for Kasna Avtar's comfort.' 'You've made a great mistake, O stranger,' said Avtar, 'Kasna Avtar is of too huge a stature and your casket seems very small. How would Kasna Avtar stretch out in this small box?' (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The Brahman planted a doubt in the mind of the danav. 'You should have been more particular, O stranger, if you really cared for your friend. Kasna Avtar is a huge man. He cannot recline comfortably in this box. Even if he lay in it he would not be able to turn on his sides. You should have thought about it, O stranger, this cot is not of Kasna Avtar's size.' *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! 'All your efforts will be in vain. This casket of yours cannot hold a man of Kasna Avtar's size, O stranger,' said the Brahman, 'Better try it yourself. Kasna Avtar is almost as bulky as you. He is of your size. See if you can lie in this casket. If it is of the





wrong size all your efforts will be in vain.’ The danav prince pondered for a while. He lowered the cage on the ground. Opening the door he stepped inside. (*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* The Brahman acted fast. He shut the trap door and locked it from outside. ‘O Iko, O danav prince, I’m none else but your enemy. Come out, let’s renew our old acquaintance.’ *Khama!* Iko pondered for a while, ‘All is not lost. I’ll show Kasma Avtar my prowess.’ He tried all his might. The cage went up high in the sky and landed on the chariot of the Sun God. It hovered above Kasma Avtar’s head.

Iko pondered for a while.
 He pondered for a while.
 Lying in the cage, mused the danav prince.
 ‘I can still work a miracle,’ thought he.
 ‘I can still work a miracle.
 I’ll strike on my enemy with all my might.’

Iko displayed such a feat.
 He displayed such a feat,
 The cage rose high in the sky.
 The cage landed in the chariot of the Sun God.
 It landed in the chariot of the Sun God.
 Iko tried with all his might.

The cage loomed over Avtar.
 It loomed over Avtar.
 It hovered over Kasma Avtar’s head.

The cage descended with such a speed,
 It descended at such a pace,
 It plunged into the netherworld.





Iko tried once again.
He tried once again.
The cage hovered over Avtar.

The cage fell and rose several times.
It fell and rose several times.
But Kasma Avtar was agile on his feet.

Iko felt drained and exhausted.
He felt drained and exhausted.
Helpless he lay in the cage.

‘I devised my own fall,’ he thought.
‘I devised my own fall.
Scanty of wit, I’ve exposed my life to great peril.’

(Tambur) O maharaj!

‘All is not lost,’ thought Iko, ‘If I try with all my might, I’ll rise up to the sky. And I’ll descend on Kasma Avtar’s head with such force that he will be shoved down the seventh sphere of the netherworld.’ Iko displayed such a feat that the cage rose high up in the sky. It touched the chariot of the Sun God. Then it started descending upon Kasma Avtar. But Avtar was quick on his feet. He evaded the descending cage. Cutting across the layers of the earth, the cage plunged into the netherworld. Once again Iko tried his might and the cage rose up to hover over Kasma Avtar. Several times did Iko try but he could not strike his arch enemy. Drained of his strength, the danav prince pondered for a while, ‘I have caused my own nemesis. This cage is so made that neither a drop of water nor a hair can penetrate it. How do I get out?’ *Khama! Jeevta!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Kasma Avtar said to the danav prince, ‘You schemed to take my life. But now you lie dying inside.’ ‘I paid the





carpenter for my own death,' thought Iko. He felt suffocated. Avtar carefully secured the chest with a padlock. He lifted it on his head and turned back for his palace. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends. *Khama!*

Kasna Avtar hoisted the chest.
He hoisted the chest.
He took the way to Vaikunthpuri.

Raising clouds of dust, Kasna Avtar walked along.
Raising clouds of dust, he walked along.
He arrived in Vaikunthpuri with hasty steps.

Kasna Avtar went to an old vault of his palace.
He went to an old vault of his palace.
He chucked the chest down the vault.

Kasna Avtar secured the vault with seven padlocks.
He secured the vault with seven padlocks.
He ensured to secure the vault before leaving.

Kasna Avtar said to his sister,
He said to his sister,
'Listen to what I say, O Hodra.'

'Never ever open the old vault, O sister.
Never ever open the old vault.
It will bring misfortune to us.'

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Kasna Avtar placed the chest in an abandoned tunnel of his palace and secured it with seven padlocks. Emerging from the tunnel he said to his sister, 'Never ever open the old tunnel. Do not allow





anyone to venture near it. It will bring misfortune to us.' *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Kasna Avtar locked the danav prince in a chest and dumped the chest in an underground vault. With each passing day, the danav withered. His stomach empty, his body shrunk. After twelve long months Iko's wasted frame turned into a tiny bee.

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Bhasha





BALO HIMMAT

One fine day an incident took place,
One fine day an incident took place,
Which turned out to be very auspicious.

Hodra pondered for a while.
She pondered for a while.
While passing by the vault she stopped to ponder.

'Some secret lies hidden in this vault.
Some secret lies hidden in this vault.
My brother doesn't want us to open it.'

Hodra opened the padlocks of the vault.
She opened the padlocks of the vault.
Seven padlocks she opened.

Hodra beheld a chest.
She beheld a chest.
She tried the lock of the chest.

Iko had been transformed into a black bee.
He had become a black bee.





He was droning in the chest.

A curious Hodra peeped into the chest.

She peeped into the chest.

The bee flew into her mouth.

The black bee penetrated her belly.

It penetrated her belly.

Puking and panting, Hodra rushed out for fresh air.

A fire seared her insides.

A fire seared her insides,

Bewildered and agonized, she lumbered about.

Jeevta! Jeevta!

(Tambur) O maharaj!

One fine day an incident occurred which turned out to be auspicious. Kasma Avatar had forbidden his kin to open the old tunnel but Hodra's curiosity took the better of her. One day when Kasma Avatar was away, she seized her chance and opened the padlocks of the vault. 'I wonder what my brother has secured here,' thought she. She found a chest lying there. 'It surely contains some secret treasure,' she thought and tried its padlock. The padlock gave way. Hodra opened the chest with care. Iko, the danav prince, had withered for twelve months and had turned into a black bee. The bee droned in the enclosure. As Hodra opened the chest and peeped in, the droning bee flew out swiftly. It flew into the mouth of the surprised princess. Panting and puking, Hodra rushed out for fresh air. The bee penetrated deep into her belly. A fire seared her inside. Restive and squirming, Hodra lumbered about. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! A fire seared Hodra's vitals. 'I've made a mistake,'





thought she. She could neither recline nor sit upright. *Khama!* As the Sun declined behind the western hills and the parakeets flew back to their nests, Kasna Avtar returned home. He saw Hodra in distress. 'Why are you restless, O sister?' he asked. 'O brother,' said she, 'I've made a mistake. I felt intrigued and went to the forbidden vault. As I opened the chest something flew into my mouth. It penetrated deep within me. I can neither rest nor walk around.' May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

⁴⁶Hodra was feeling restless.

She was feeling restless.

A fire burnt inside her.

Kasna Avtar pondered for a while.

He pondered for a while.

'Ill has been done in the world,' thought he.

'The soul of my enemy is festering within her.

The soul of my enemy is festering within her.

It demands quick action.'

Kasna Avtar went into the tunnel.

He went into the tunnel.

Along with Hodra, he entered the forbidden vault.

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!*

'I had forbidden you to open the vault,' Kasna Avtar chided his sister, 'Ill has been done in the world. You have let an enemy into the house. Iko, the danav prince, was shut in the chest. His withering body was reduced to a black bee. You unwittingly opened the chest and let him enter your belly,' Kasna Avtar pondered for a while. 'Iko will take birth as my nephew. Killing one's nephew is a sin. And he is sure to exact his revenge on me. I must act fast. He must die before





he sees sunlight.' Avtar turned to a fidgety Hodra, 'You seem a bit restive. Listening to the narration of *Sakro Véd*⁴⁷ eases one's pain.' Kasna Avtar laid a couch for his sister. He narrated the secret of breaching the wheel of death. Mumbling in affirmation every now and then, Hodra listened to her brother's recitation. Her pangs of pain ebbed as she listened to the strategy of breaching the spinning maze. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

Kasna Avtar recited the *Sakro Véd* to Hodra.

He recited the *Sakro Véd* to Hodra.

And she mumbled in affirmation at intervals.

Kasna Avtar narrated the strategies of war to her.

He narrated the strategies of war to her.

He described the secrets of different circular

military formations.

Kasna Avtar described how to break through the copper array.

He described how to break through the copper array.

He also narrated the secret of the bronze array.

Kasna Avtar depicted the secret of the brass array.

He depicted the secret of the brass array.

He told Hodra how to penetrate the brass array.

Kasna Avtar revealed the secrets of war depicted in *Sakro Véd*.

He revealed the secrets of war depicted in *Sakro Véd*.

Hodra responded to the recitation by mumbling

in affirmation.

Kasna Avtar narrated the secret of the array of lead.

He narrated the secret of the array of lead.

Hodra responded at regular intervals.





Avtar explained the secret of the sand array.

He explained the secret of the sand array.

Hodra's pain started to ebb.

Calm and comforted, Hodra drifted into slumber.

Calm and comforted, she drifted into slumber.

Relieved of her pain she fell asleep.

Jeevta! Bhalai!

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Kasna Avtar recited the *Sakro Véd* to Hodra. She responded by mumbling in affirmation. Avtar narrated the strategies used to breach different war formations. He told her how to break through circular formations. He narrated the secret of breaking through the copper array. He told her about penetrating the bronze array. Avtar told Hodra the secret of the brass array and she mumbled in affirmation. Recitation of the *Sakro Véd* eased her agitation. Calmed and comforted, her eye-lids drooped. Listening to the recitation, she drifted into slumber. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Kasna Avtar knew about the power of recitation. He wanted to get the life in Hodra's womb aborted. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Kasna Avtar narrated the secrets of breaching six different circular arrays. The life growing in Hodra's belly learnt the lessons of war. Intently, it heard each word. But as Kasna Avtar recited the secret of the sixth array Hodra drifted into slumber. The unborn child was eager to learn and started grunting inside his mother. An unaware Kasna Avtar continued to recite. He wanted his enemy to die. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Suddenly, Kasna Avtar realized his folly. He had taught the secrets to his enemy. The nephew spoke from within his sleeping mother's belly, 'O *mama*, why did you stop reciting? My





mother has drifted into sleep but I am listening. I have learnt the secrets of the wheel of death. Disclose the secret of the last maze. Tell me about the array of dung. Then I can breach through the spinning maze. I'll take over the throne of Vaikunthpuri.' Kasna Avatar had realized his folly. He stopped narrating the strategy of war. He kept the secret of the last phase to himself. *Khama!* May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

Kasna Avatar pondered for a while.

He pondered for a while.

He mused over the impending calamity.

'An enemy develops in my sister's belly.

An enemy nurtures in my sister's belly.

Ill has been done in the world.'

(An accompanist: Our Lord was worried. The lead singer: *Khama!*)

Hodra was with child.

She was with child.

A life grew inside her belly.

On an auspicious day,

On an auspicious day,

The Sun shone bright over the world.

Let's chant our God's name.

Let's chant our God's name.

He is the benefactor of the poor.

We sing in the praise of our God.

We sing in the praise of our God.

Glory be to our God.





Hodra was in the first flush of her youth.
 She was in the first flush of her youth.
 She had entered the spring of her life.

Kasna Avtar pondered for a while.
 He pondered for a while.
 'Time has come for her nuptials.'⁴⁸

Kasna Avtar adorned himself in various ways.
 He adorned himself in various ways.
 He adorned himself in fitting finery.

Kasna Avtar wore gold-engraved footwear.
 He wore gold-engraved footwear.
 His feet were encased in gold-engraved footwear.

Kasna Avtar held a stick in his hand.
 He held a stick in his hand.
 He swished it as he walked.

Kasna Avtar took along a coconut in his hand.
 He took along a coconut in his hand.
 He set off to find an alliance for his sister.

Kasna Avtar walked through the lanes and alleyways.
 He walked through the lanes and alleyways.
 He thought of finding a match for Hodra.

Kasna Avtar walked along the way.
 He walked along the way.
 Walking along he thought of Hodra's nuptials.

'I must find a suitable groom for her,' thought Kasna Avtar.
 'I must find a suitable groom for her.'





He must be our equal in rank.'

(Tambur) O maharaj!

On a very auspicious day a narrator narrates the story and the entire court listens to him intently. This incident occurred during satyug but is narrated in the period of kaliyug. People listen to the tale enthusiastically. As the drummer exalts the spirit of the warriors by vigorously beating his drum, similarly, a *honkaria* prompts the lead singer to narrate his tale more interestingly. A drummer ignites excitement amongst the warriors. A *honkaria* kindles verve in the narrator. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! This is a tale of our God. Avtar pondered for a while, 'Hodra is in the spring of her life. She is youthful and agile. O, under her supple shapely form, her cot bends like a bower. And the strips of her blouse snap when she curves her body with verve. She is in the spring of her life. I must act fast and find her a spouse.' Kasma Avtar wore a dhoti with a golden lace. He adorned himself in many fine ways. He put on gold-encrusted footwear and took a stick in his hand. With a coconut in hand, Kasma Avtar set off on a journey. Walking past the streets and alleyways, he arrived at Manek Chawk. He pondered for a while, 'Where do I begin the search for a suitable groom for my sister? He should be caring and kind to her and be my peer in rank and status. And I need to make haste as her belly is swelling day by day.' *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! 'I must go to Dhavlo Gadh,' thought Avtar, 'Seventy-eight Kaurav brothers rule over that land. They are mighty and strong. They'll certainly stand by me in times of difficulty.' Kasma Avtar took the way to Dhavlo Gadh. Hurriedly, he walked along the path.

Kasma Avtar sped along the way.





He tore along the way.
He went towards the land of the Kauravs.

With a coconut in his hand,
With a coconut in his hand,
Kasna Avtar arrived in the land of the Kauravs.

The royal court of the Kauravs was in progress.
The royal court of the Kauravs was in progress.
They were engrossed in relating tales of bravery.

Opium was being served.
Opium was being served.
The Kaurav princes were conversing among themselves.

Kasna Avtar walked straight to the court.
He walked straight to the court.
The Kauravs watched him from a distance.

Surprised and scared,
Surprised and scared,
The Kauravs jumped on their heels to greet Kasna Avtar.

Warmly, they embraced Avtar.
Warmly, they embraced Avtar.
Respectfully, they ushered him to their court.

They led Kasna Avtar to a golden throne.
They led Kasna Avtar to a golden throne.
Avtar sat on a gold encrusted throne.

‘Listen to what I say, O Kaurav princes,’ said Kasna Avtar.
‘Listen to what I say.
Listen intently to what I say.’





'You are sons of a valiant father.
You are sons of a valiant father.
Glory be to the mother who brought you into this world.'

The Kauravs spoke to Avtar,
They spoke to Avtar,
'Tell us the purpose of your visit.'

(Tambur) O maharaj!

The Kaurav court was busy. Seated on tasseled rugs, their chieftains were engrossed in narrating tales of bravery. Sumptuous steaks of goat meat were being served. The best of the liquor passed from hand to hand. The counsellors were discussing court matters. Opium was served generously. The hookahs were filled with the best hemp. The Kaurav princes were in the best of spirits. Kasna Avtar arrived at the scene. He went straight to the Kaurav court. *Khama!* The Kaurav brothers beheld Kasna Avtar from a distance. They sprang to their feet. They went forward to receive him. They embraced him with much warmth. They made him sit on a golden throne. 'You are sons of a valiant father,' said Avtar, 'Glory be to the mother who brought you into this world.' The Kauravs were still puzzled. 'What has brought you here, O Kasna Avtar?' they asked. 'I have come to your court with a request. I am sure you will not disappoint me,' said Avtar. 'Who can deny Avtar? We will be happy to oblige you,' said the Kaurav princes. 'I have come with a marriage proposal. I seek an alliance for my sister.' The Kaurav brothers pondered for a while. They nodded at one another. *Khama!*

Avtar said to the Kaurav princes,
He said to the Kaurav princes,
'Listen to what I say.'





'I have come with a request.
I have come with a request.
I seek an alliance for my sister.'

'I seek a gallant and upright groom.
I seek a gallant and upright groom.
We will be worthy relatives.'

The Kauravs pondered for a while.
They pondered for a while.
They looked into each other's eyes.

'Avtar has come to our court,' thought they.
'Avtar has come to our court.
He has come with a proposal.'

'His sister must be ugly to look at.
His sister must be ugly to look at.
Or she must have erred in the flush of her youth.'

They spoke after some time.
They spoke after some time.
'O Lord, listen to what we say.'

'We are your vassals, O Lord.
We are your vassals.
How do we accept such a proposal?'

'We are not your equal in strength or status, O Lord.
We are not your equal in strength or status.
We are inferior in every respect.'

'You are our Master and Lord, O Kasna Avtar.
You are our Master and Lord.'





We cannot accept the hand of your sister.'

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Kasna Avtar said to the Kaurav princes, 'I seek an alliance for my sister with one of the Kaurav princes. We will have excellent relations by marriage. We will stand by you in trying periods. I urge you once again to reconsider your decision.' But the Kauravs did not oblige. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* 'With much hope I had come to your assembly. My sister is pretty and fair. She is closest to my heart. You'll regret your decision.' But the Kaurav brothers were resolute. With a heavy heart Avtar left their court.

(Tambur) O maharaj! Kasna Avtar pondered for a while. 'I must act fast. I should find a suitable match for my sister and tie her in wedlock.' Avtar thought of the Pandav brothers. 'Let me go to Asanapari. The Pandavs are mighty princes.' *Khama!*

Avtar took the way to Asanapari.

He took the way to Asanapari.

He walked towards the land of the Pandavs.

Walking through the streets and alleyways of Asanapari,

Walking through the streets and alleyways of Asanapari,

He arrived at the marketplace.

The court of the Pandavs was assembled.

The court of the Pandavs was assembled.

Kasna Avtar walked straight to the royal court.

Green and yellow rugs were spread.

Green and yellow rugs were spread.

With the point of a spear tasseled rugs were spread.





Tales of bravery were being narrated.

Tales of bravery were being narrated.

The Pandav princes were engrossed in conversation.

The Pandavs beheld Kasma Avatar walking towards their court.

They beheld Kasma Avatar walking towards their court.

They sprang to their feet to greet him.

Warmly, they embraced Avatar.

Warmly, they embraced Avatar.

Respectfully, they ushered him to their court.

They led Kasma Avatar to a golden throne.

They led Kasma Avatar to a golden throne.

Avatar was seated on a gold encrusted throne.

In a copper vessel water was heated.

In a copper vessel water was heated.

The Pandavs welcomed Kasma Avatar with
affection and warmth.

The Pandavs helped Kasma Avatar to have a bath.

They helped Kasma Avatar to have a bath.

In golden and copper vessels water was heated for Avatar.

Avatar adorned himself in many fine ways.

He adorned himself in many fine ways.

He was clad in the finest attire.

Avatar sat on a golden throne.

He sat on a golden throne.

The Pandav court assembled.

The Pandavs offered gugal.





They offered gugal.
Many bhajans were sung.

The Pandavs fanned Kasma Avtar with frilled hand fans.
They fanned Kasma Avtar with frilled hand fans.
They served Avtar in many ways.

A mother should bear only worthy offsprings.
She should bear only worthy offsprings.
Or her motherhood will be wasted.

The Pandavs were the sons of a righteous mother.
They were the sons of a righteous mother.
Glory be to the mother who bore them.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

The Pandavs offered gugal and sang bhajans. With their hand fans they gently fanned Avtar. They discussed many worldly matters with him. After a while Kasma Avtar spoke in a low tone, 'You have showered warmth and affection on me. But won't you ask me the reason of my visit?' The Pandav princes said, 'O Lord, your presence itself is so valuable to us. The reason hardly matters. If you have come here to spend a day, we'd insist that you stay with us for five days. We are honoured by your visit.' 'But at least try to guess the purpose of my visit,' said Avtar. Arjhan, the Pandav prince, said, 'O Lord, tell us why you have graced our kingdom? With what intention have you come to Asanapari?' Avtar replied, 'I have come with a request. I am looking for a suitable groom for my sister. You are my peers in strength and rank. I seek an alliance for my sister with one of the Pandav brothers. We will be good relatives by family ties. And you know how fair and pretty my sister is.' *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! 'She will make a good wife to Arjhan, the





Pandav,' said Avtar. Arjhan and I as brothers-in-law will get along well.' The Pandav brothers looked at one another. 'O Kasna Avtar, you are our Master and Lord. We are your vassals. We cannot match you in strength or rank. We cannot even think of such a relationship,' said they. 'You need not feel scared. I offer you the hand of my sister. One of you must accept it. You cannot refuse my request,' said Avtar. The Pandavs pondered for a while. They went aside and talked among themselves. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

The Pandavs spoke to Avtar.

They spoke to Avtar.

'Listen to what we say.'

'You are our esteemed guest, O Avtar.

You are our esteemed guest.

Give us some time to contemplate.'

'We'll consult our mother, O Avtar.

We'll consult our mother.

Our mother will take the decision.'

The Pandavs sent word to their mother.

They sent word to their mother.

Kutma, the queen mother, came to the court.

'Listen to what we say, O mother,' said the Pandav brothers.

'Listen to what we say.

Kasna Avtar has come to us with a request.

Kutma bowed to Kasna Avtar.

She bowed to Kasna Avtar.

She paid her respect to Avtar.





They indulged in some worldly talk.
They indulged in some worldly talk.
Kasna Avtar asked about her well-being.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Kasna Avtar pondered for a while. 'Hodra is with child. Soon her belly will swell out. My enemy is growing in her womb. He is sure to settle old scores when he grows up. He can't be reared in Vaikunthpuri. Hodra should be given away in marriage.' Thus Avtar was absorbed in his thoughts. [Meanwhile], the Pandavs sent for their mother. Kutma arrived at the court in haste. She bowed to Avtar and said, 'You have honoured us with your visit. What has brought you here?' 'I seek an alliance for my sister. I have come here with a coconut. Your consent is awaited.' *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Kutma pondered for a while. 'We cannot disregard your request. Willingly we shall assent to your proposal. Arjhan shall accept the coconut. He will be tied in nuptials with your sister.' Kutma called her sons aside and said, 'He is our Master and Lord. We cannot deny his request. Hodra is our Avtar's sibling. She must be received with warmth and affection.' The Pandavs said to Avtar, 'Should we come to your place to take the bride or will you bring her here?' Kasna Avtar replied, 'We don't want to celebrate with pomp. I'll bring her here if you agree.' *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! As the Sun declined behind the western hills and the parakeets flew back to their nests, Kasna Avtar returned with his sister.

One fine day an incident took place,
One fine day an incident took place,
Which turned out to be auspicious.





The Pandavs were absorbed in singing bhajans.
They were absorbed in singing bhajans.
They sang bhajans to the accompaniment of the tambur.

Sadev took the lead.
Sadev took the lead.
And the others sang after him.

Hodra was in pain.
She was in labour.
She convulsed with pain.

The queen called out to her maids.
She called out to her maids.
'O girls, listen to what I say.'

'Summon a midwife for me.
Summon a midwife for me.
O maids, there is no time to delay.'

Lali and Phuli, the maids, gathered around and said,
Lali and Phuli, the maids, gathered around and said,
'Listen to what we say, O queen.'

'We haven't seen the midwife's home.
We haven't seen the midwife's home.
Tell us how to find her.'

'Go straight to the street in the east, O maids,' said the queen.
'Go straight to the street in the east.
A mirror embellishes her courtyard.'

'A paras pipal tree stands in front of her house, O maids.
A paras pipal tree stands in front of her house.'





The fence of her house is thatched with the
growth of *nagarvel*.'

'Go by these signs and fetch the midwife, O maids.

Go by these signs and fetch the midwife.

Follow these signs and you'll reach her house.'

The maids went to call the midwife,

They went to call the midwife.

Hurriedly, they went to her place.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Hodra said to her maids, 'O maids, I am not feeling well. I am in severe pain. Call a midwife for me.' All the maids, Lali and Phuli, Remli and Temli, gathered around the queen and said, 'O queen, we haven't seen the midwife's house. Where do we go? Where do we find her home and hearth?' Hodra replied, 'Go straight to the street in the east. A mirror is hung in her courtyard. A paras pipal tree stands in front of her house. The fence of her house is thatched with *nagarvel*. Look for these signs. Now run to her house and fetch her as quickly as possible.' Hitching up their skirts the maids raced to the midwife's place. They called on the midwife. 'Listen, O old woman, wake up if you're asleep. And come out if you're already up.' The old woman said, 'O girls, what's all this fuss about?' 'O old woman,' said the maids, 'the queen is in labour. She's in severe pain. She is so restless! You must make haste and come quickly.' The old woman fastened a pair of worn out footwear on her feet. She plodded along the way with a stick in her hand. *Khama!*

(Tambur) She went to the palace of Hodra. *O maharaj!* She climbed the palace of clouds. She asked for some oil. She massaged the queen's belly with it. She ran her hand over her abdomen. The queen was in labour. She screamed with pain. The palace of clouds was in





commotion. A prince was about to be born. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The queen was very restless. A prince was born to her. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

A prince was born to Hodra.
A prince was born to Hodra.
The birth was announced by sounding golden gongs.

Long live the Pandav prince.
Long live the Pandav prince.
His birth was announced by sounding golden gongs!

People rejoiced by blowing trumpets and drums.
They rejoiced by blowing trumpets and drums.
'Long live the prince!' they cried.

Dry dates and coconut pieces were doled out.
Dry dates and coconut pieces were doled out.
Ground sugar was distributed to the people of the town.

'Heat some water in a copper vessel, O maids,' said the midwife.
'Heat some water in a copper vessel.
Let us give the prince a bath.'

The midwife gave the child to Hodra.
She gave the child to Hodra.
Hodra pressed him to her bosom.

Asanapari was in revelry.
Asanapari was in revelry.
A prince was born to their king.





The child was named Balo Himmat.⁴⁹

He was named Balo Himmat.

He was called Balo Himmat.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Balo's cradle was made of gold. With a shimmering string he was rocked. The prince grew by day and night. Asanapari was in a flurry of activities. *Khama!* The five Pandav brothers, along with Kutma, Dhofa and Hodra, sang bhajans. The Kauravs were informed about the birth of the prince. They went green with envy. May you be well, *O honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

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NARAD AND THE KAURAV PRINCES

(Tambur) O maharaj!

The Kaurav princes talked among themselves, 'The Pandavs are prospering. But we are far superior to them. The five of them are no match for the seventy-eight of us. And look at them! All the time with Kutma, Dhofa and Hodra, they remain engrossed in singing *bhajans*. We don't care for the likes of them.'

(Tambur) O maharaj! One fine day something happened which turned out to be very auspicious. Narad, the wandering monk, arrived in Dhavlo Gadh. Plucking on his tambur, he chanted Avtar's name. This irritated the Kaurav princes. 'You are good for nothing, O Narad. All the time you keep plucking on your tambur. Our cousins, the Pandavs, also spend their time worshipping. We want to test their bhakti. Take a few things that we give you to the Pandav kingdom and ask them to accomplish a couple of tasks for us. We want to test their righteousness.'

(Tambur) O maharaj! The Kauravs placed a mango seed on flames and gave it to Narad. 'Tell our cousins to plant this stone and tend the tree. Bring back the first mango crop that grows on that tree,' said the Kaurav princes. Giving a virgin heifer to Narad they then said, 'Take this heifer along and ask the Pandavs to turn it into a milch





cow. We want to taste its milk. Also take this sapling of the champa tree, ask our cousins to plant it in their garden and bring its flowers back for us.' As Narad was leaving with these items, one of the Kauravs stopped him and said, 'Here is some husked rice. Tell those worshippers of Avtar to grow them in their field and send the yield back to us. We are hungry and want to feast on the harvest they produce in their field.' Narad left for Asanapari. 'How will the Pandav princes grow a mango tree from this burnt seed?' he pondered as he walked. The Pandavs beheld Narad coming to their dhuni. They put aside their tambur and cymbals and rose to greet him. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O *maharaj!* With great respect they led Narad to their dhuni. After a while Narad said, 'I have been sent by your cousins. They want you to accomplish a few tasks for them. They wish to test your righteousness.' The Pandav brothers listened to what Narad said. They picked up their tambur and pairs of cymbals. They sang bhajans in the praise of their Lord. They performed an aarti to please the Almighty God. *(Tambur)* O *maharaj!* The Pandav princes beseeched God to favour them. Then they sowed the mango stone, rice husks and the champa sapling in their field. In no time, the stone sprouted and grew into a mango tree, and ripe mangoes hung from its branches. The heifer gave birth to a calf and turned into a lactating cow. The champa sapling blossomed with flowers and the rice plants swayed in the gentle breeze. Within an hour the task was accomplished and Narad left for the land of the Kauravs. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

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INDRANI AND BALO HIMMAT

One fine day many a *satiya* gathered.
One fine day many a *satiya* gathered.
They assembled at Dhavlo Gadh.

They were discussing various matters.
They were discussing various matters.
Suddenly, Indar spoke aloud.

‘Listen intently to what I say, O *satiyas*,’ said he.
‘Listen intently to what I say.
Who has the chastest spouse?’

‘Let us visit the house of a *satiya*,’ said they.
‘Let us visit the house of a *satiya*,
Who claims to have a chaste wife.’

‘Let us find out whose wife is chaste and obedient.
Let us find out whose wife is chaste and obedient.
Let us see who is the most fortunate among us all.’

(An accompanist: O brother, see how they talk. The lead singer:
Khama!)





‘I don’t know about others,’ said Indar.

‘I don’t know about others.

But I’m sure of my wife’s obedience.’

(An accompanist: It’s like telling right from wrong. The lead singer: *Khama!*)

‘Let’s verify his claim,’ said the sages.

‘Let’s verify his claim.

We’ll see whether his wife is indeed obedient.’

‘Be my guest and see for yourself,’ said Indar.

‘Be my guest and see for yourself.

Come to my house to verify my claim.’

(*Tambur*) *O maharaj!*

On one hand Balo Himmat was growing and on the other, the seven sages assembled to contemplate over various matters. *O maharaj!* Khatu, Gautam and Indar, the chief of the Gods, had assembled along with Gorakh, the great guru, and Machhendrar, his disciple. The sages, Kamal and Darbha, were also present at Dhavlo Gad. They conversed among themselves. ‘Listen to what I say,’ said one of the satiyas, ‘We tread on the path of righteousness. But are our consorts worthy of us? Are they obedient and clever?’ ‘Let us find out whose wife is the most dutiful and clever,’ said the others. (*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* ‘I don’t know about others,’ said Indar, the king of the Gods, ‘But my wife is the most astute woman. She is peerless in obedience and cleverness. You may visit my place and see this for yourselves.’ The satiyas nodded to one another, ‘We’ll go to Indrapuri to confirm.’ The sages decided to be Indar’s guests and put his claim to test. *Khama!* May you be well, *O honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.





(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The Sun declined behind the western hills and the parakeets flew back to their nests. The sages picked their tamburs and pairs of cymbals. They sat to sing bhajans. They assembled to worship God. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! A sage spoke aloud, 'We should pay a visit to Indrapuri. Indar has boasted about his wife's tolerance. He claims that she is the sharpest woman. Let us go to his palace and put her cleverness to test.' (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! All the satiyyas set out for Indrapuri. They tore along the way. Walking past strange lands, they arrived at the outskirts of Indrapuri. *Khama*!

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Indar and his consort saw the sages from a distance. 'I can see the satiyyas coming. Let us meet them midway and welcome them to our home,' said Indar. 'We'll spread tasseled rugs on their path. Their feet should not get soiled,' added he. Indar and his wife laid out rugs on the ground for the sages to walk upon. They went forward to extend them a warm welcome. *Khama*!

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Indar and his consort waited upon the sages. They bowed respectfully to their guests. Indar pressed their feet to show reverence. The satiyyas had come to test whether Indrani was obedient and clever. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! One of the sages ogled at Indar's consort. Another lustily winked at her. A third sage pinched her hard on her side. Indrani was taken aback. She stood ashen faced. The sages wanted to prove Indar wrong. *Khama*! (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! A satiyya poked a finger into Indrani's belly and another stepped on her foot. 'They seem to be imposters, real satiyyas would not behave like this,' thought Indrani.

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Indar tried to reassure his wife. 'They are here to test your wit. They are trying your patience. See that you don't lose your tolerance.' Indar urged his wife to remain calm and composed. But she was at her wits end. She could not take the poking any more. She turned to Indar and said, 'See how they pinch and poke. They are a blot on the name of ascetics. Ill has been done in





the world.' Indar tried to reason with his consort. He knew why the sati-yas were behaving in such a weird manner. 'Didn't you see how they stepped on my foot?' retorted Indrani, 'Turn them out for my sake. If they misbehave one more time, I'll snatch a tambur from their hands and break their skulls.' Indar pondered for a while, 'Anger has overcome my wife. The sati-yas have achieved their goal. They have proved me wrong.' *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! Indrani's patience was on edge. Indar's face fell. The honour of his house was blotted. The guests were turned back. Indrani had erred on this side of the world. Indar went after the sages and said, 'I apologize for my wife's hostility. Please give me a chance to serve you. Please return to my place and be my guests. I don't care whether my wife stays with me, but I can't lose this opportunity to serve sati-yas like yourselves. Together we'll sing bhajans. Together we'll chant our God's name.' Indrani overheard her husband talking thus to the sages and said, 'If you prefer to entertain these imposters, I'll leave. I can't admit them in my house.' Indar and his consort quarrelled. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! A quarrelsome wife makes her husband suffer. An abusive woman derides her husband's honour. 'A husband may be slighted by his wife but why should we be victimized?' said a sage. They turned on their heels and walked away. Indar ran after his guests. He fell at their feet and said, 'I have been humiliated. I boasted of my woman's wit. But she has proved to be abusive. I esteem my guests more than my honour. I can't have you return without having crossed my threshold.' *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! The sati-yas were in a dilemma. 'We have achieved our aim. Why should we stay back and cause him distress? Indrani will not be reconciled.' An infuriated Indrani trembled from toe to tip of head. 'Choose between me and your guests,' she said,





‘these sages are imposters. A true devotee can’t be lecherous. Why should I stay with you? I had better find a valiant man as a husband.’ Indrani hitched high her sari and set out for an unknown destination. An unperturbed Indar invited the sages to his house. They sat down to chant the name of God. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Indar and the sages engaged in singing bhajans, plucking their tamburs and clapping their cymbals. The thwarted wife of Indar walked away from Indrapuri. She pondered for a while. ‘I can’t live life with a coward. I’ll find a brave man for a husband.’ She contemplated her plight. ‘The Kaurav princes rule Dhavlo Gadh. The seventy-eight Kaurav brothers are known for their bravery. I’ll have one of them as a spouse,’ thought she. Indrani took the way to the land of the Kauravs. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Indrani arrived at Dhavlo Gadh. She walked down the lanes and alleyways. She reached the marketplace. The seventy-eight Kaurav brothers sat upright in their royal court. Tasseled rugs were spread with pointed spears. The court was busy. Tales of brave exploits were being discussed. The Kaurav princes beheld the consort of Indar coming to their court. They were surprised to see such an illustrious visitor. ‘What brings you here, O wife of Indar?’ asked they. ‘I have come here with high hopes and aspirations. I have heard that the Kauravs are gallant warriors. I seek to marry one.’ *Khama!* ‘Listen to what we say, O consort of Indar. Your husband is matchless in bravery. We dare not give shelter to his wife,’ replied the Kaurav brothers. Indrani said, ‘O Kauravs, I was wrong to think of you as dauntless men. The seventy-eight of you can easily vanquish Indar. You have thwarted me.’ ‘We don’t want to lock horns with the mighty Indar for the sake of a woman. We don’t want to give you false hopes. It is better you go elsewhere. It is unwise to give shelter to the abandoned wife of a powerful man.’ (*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Indrani cursed the Kauravs, ‘May you perish for your cowardice.’





With a heavy heart a crestfallen Indrani left Dhavlo Gadh.

‘I have come here with high hopes, O Pandav brothers.
I have come here with high hopes.
You are known for your prowess,’ said Indrani.

‘Listen to what I say, O Indrani.
Listen to what I say.
You are the consort of a mighty man,’ said Arjhan.

‘Your spouse is matchless in bravery, O Indrani.
Your spouse is matchless in bravery.
We are by no means his peers.’

‘I had come to be tied in wedlock with one of you, O Arjhan.
I had come to be tied in wedlock with one of you.
You have turned me down,’ said Indrani.

‘We shouldn’t be insincere in our talk, O Indrani.
We shouldn’t be insincere in our talk.
We will be committed to hell if we lie to a
woman of your rank.’

Sighing and heaving, she awaited Arjhan’s reply.
Sighing and heaving, she awaited Arjhan’s reply.
Bereft of hope, Indrani tried to win Arjhan to her side.

‘I dreamt of dwelling in Asanapari, O Arjhan.
I dreamt of dwelling in Asanapari.
I thought of making your palace my abode.’

‘Don’t indulge in false hopes, O Indrani,’ said Arjhan.
‘Don’t indulge in false hopes.
It is better you reconcile with Indar.’





(Tambur) O maharaj!

A crestfallen Indrani left the kingdom of the Kauravs. She pondered for a while. 'The Kauravs have turned me down. Now what should I do? Where can I find a man worthy of my hand?' she walked on for some time. 'The Pandavs are the tigers of the land. They shed light like lamps. They won't disappoint me,' thought she. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* 'There's no dearth of brave men in this land of the mortals. I'll surely find a gem of a man as a husband,' pondered Indrani. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* It is not wise to pick a quarrel with a chaste woman. One should not slight a woman of one's house. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Indrani pondered for a while. 'The five Pandav brothers are chivalrous. I'll go to their court. They will understand my plight. One of them will surely take me as his wife. The rest of my life will be spent in their cloud-capped palace.' *(Tambur) O maharaj!* The court of the Pandav princes was bustling with activity. They were engrossed in relating tales of bravery. With pointed spears green and yellow rugs were spread on the ground. The counsellors were discussing court matters. Opium was being served generously. The hookahs were filled with the best hemp. The Pandav princes were in the best of spirits. Indrani sneaked into the court of the Pandavs. With her face veiled, she stood in a corner. Pretty and fair, she looked like a newly sprung red rose. Surprised, the Pandavs gazed at her. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Standing in a corner, her face covered in veil, Indrani spoke, 'I'm the consort of Indra.' 'We welcome Indar's consort to our land,' said Arjhan, the Pandav. 'What can we do for you? How can we entertain you?' 'I've heard that the Pandav brothers are noble and brave. I've come to marry you. One of you should take me as wife.' *Khama! (Tambur) O maharaj!* The Pandavs pondered for a while, 'She is out of her wits.' 'O Indrani,' they said, 'Are you under the influence of some potent medicine or are you making fun of us?'





‘Listen to what I say, O Pandavs,’ said she, ‘I have come here with much hope and aspiration. I want to marry one of you. I seek a Pandav prince as my husband.’ *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* The Pandav brothers said, ‘You have erred on this side of the world. Indar is matchless in strength. We don’t want to lock horns with him. For the sake of a woman we can’t lay down our lives. It would be better if you reconcile yourself with Indar.’ ‘Indar is not a match for the five of you,’ said Indrani, ‘You need not fear his strength. The Pandavs are men of repute. Why should they fear one Indar? I beseech you to take me as your spouse.’ ‘You are welcome as our guest,’ said Arjhan, ‘Stay at our cloud-capped palace for a couple of days. But you can’t live here forever. We dare not displease Indar.’ Sighing and heaving, Indrani stared at the palace of the clouds. How she wished to dwell in it! Desperately, she tried to convince the Pandav princes, ‘I had not expected you to be scared of Indar. I’ll serve you well in your cloud-capped palace.’ But the Pandavs stood firm in their decision. ‘The Pandavs have turned me down. I’ll show them my worth. I’ll teach them a lesson,’ thought Indrani. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Indrani stepped out of the royal court. Angry and agitated, she watched an adolescent boy coming her way. ‘I’ll pounce on this child and kill him,’ thought she. She followed the child for some time and leapt on him. *Khama!* (*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* An infuriated Indrani was at her wits end. In frustration, she thought of killing the boy. She followed him till some distance and then dashed at him with great force. ‘He is a child. I’ll bump into him and trip him,’ thought Indrani. But she was proved wrong. The child stood hard like a stone and she was toppled down. She fell on the ground. The boy pondered for a while, ‘Who’s this woman to bump into me? She did it intentionally.’ The boy trembled with anger. ‘I’ll show her my mettle,’ thought the child. He struck her with his left hand and pulled her up with the right. He heaved her over his head





and whirled her around in the air. Whirling her up in the air, the boy walked towards the cloud-capped palace. *Khama!* May you be well, *O honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

He whirled the queen over his head.

He whirled the queen over his head.

He whirled her in the air.

Indrani shrieked and squealed.

She shrieked and squealed.

She beseeched the boy to spare her life.

'I'll teach you a lesson, O woman,' said he.

'I'll teach you a lesson.

You intentionally bumped into me.'

'You pushed me, O woman,' said he.

'You pushed me.

You tried to kill me.'

'I was disappointed, O child,' said she.

'I was disappointed.

Out of frustration I tried to trip you.'

'I'll show you my worth, O Indrani,' said the boy.

'I'll show you my worth.

I can work miracles.'

'I'll make you my queen, O Indrani.

I'll make you my queen.

I'll take you to my palace of clouds.'

(An accompanist: Don't underrate the child. The lead singer: *Khama!*)





Drums resounded at Balo's palace.
Drums resounded at Balo's palace.
Beating the drums he announced his decision.

'What is this sound?' pondered the Pandav princes.
'What is this sound?'
The court of the Pandavs was bustling with activity.

Hurriedly, they ran towards Arjhan's palace.
Hurriedly, they ran towards Arjhan's palace.
The Pandav brothers raced to the palace.

'Why do you beat the drums, O Balo?' asked they.
'Why do you beat the drums?'
What announcement do you wish to make?'

'I have wedded the queen of Indar, O uncles.
I have wedded the queen of Indar.
I have made her my queen,' said Balo.

'You have done ill in the world, O son,' said the Pandavs.
'You have done ill in the world.
You've erred on this side of the world.'

'A coward dies several times before his death, O uncles.
A coward dies several times before his death.
I have dared the Lord of the Gods,' said Balo.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Balo struck Indrani with his left hand and pulled her up with his right. He weighed her above his head and whirled her around in the air. He walked through the streets and alleyways of Asanapari. 'Who are you, O woman? Tell me the name of your spouse. Why did you





try to shove me down?’ asked Balo. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Indrani replied, ‘Hold on, O child, I’m the consort of Indar, the Lord of the Gods. You have whirled me around for a long time. You have made my limbs and body ache.’ ‘But why did you jostle me? I know you did it intentionally,’ said Balo.

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! ‘Listen, O child, I had a squabble with my spouse. He turned me out of his house. I am searching for a valiant man. I went to the land of the Kauravs. But they did not pay heed to me. I came to Asanapari and beseeched the Pandav princes for shelter. But they refused to marry me. In sheer frustration I wanted to do something wicked. I saw you coming and decided to kill you. But you are strong like a bull. My hands got hurt. I toppled down. I took you for a child. But you are a man indeed.’ Balo Himmat pondered for a while. ‘I’ll take you to my cloud-capped palace,’ said he. *Khama*!

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Balo decided to marry Indrani. He led her to his palace. He turned up the face of the drum and started beating on it with sticks. Drum sounds reverberated in the streets and alleyways of Asanapari. The Pandav princes pondered for a while, ‘Who’s beating the drum so hard? Some unforeseen event has occurred.’ They ran towards the palace of the clouds. ‘I have wedded the consort of Indar,’ announced Balo. The Pandav brothers froze midway. ‘You have erred on this side of the world, O son. Indar is matchless in bravery. He’ll destroy our kingdom. We can’t think of displeasing him even in our dreams.’ *Khama*!

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Balo Himmat said with pride, ‘I’m not afraid of Indar. Bravery lies in locking horns with one’s equal. Why should I fight with a lesser warrior? A true warrior would never turn down a calf or a woman seeking protection. I am the son of a Pandav. I urge you not to be scared of Indar. I’m prepared for the consequences. If he ever comes, I know how to fight him.’ Balo was full of valour but the Pandav brothers feared Indar’s wrath. ‘Our child has taken a





hasty and rash action,' they thought. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The Pandavs pondered for a while. 'Our son has done ill in the world. He should not have challenged Indar. We should be prepared for the consequences.' O *maharaj*! Fury blazed across Indar's face as he heard the news. 'The Pandavs have erred on this side of the world. How dare their son give shelter to my consort?' An affronted Indar summoned the Wind God. The Wind God said, 'Your fear is unfounded. None can dare to shelter Indar's consort.' Indar replied, 'Arjhan's son has wedded my wife. She dwells in his palace of clouds. I want to take revenge. O Wind God, you are my ally. I owe half my strength to you. Balo is a dauntless warrior. I need to win my wife back from him. I urge you to go to Asanapari and attack his palace of clouds.'

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The Wind God listened to his Lord. A wave of anger surged through his body. 'I'll teach the Pandav prince a lesson. I'll play a game of destruction. Not a single building will stand straight in Asanapari. The Pandavs are yet to taste my wrath.' (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The Wind God blew hard over Asanapari. A violent hailstorm swept across the town. Lightning and thunder gashed the sky. The wind struck the town, sending the spires and domes of the cloud-capped palaces swirling across the sky. Balo pondered for a while. He said to Indrani, 'Indar has sent the Wind God to avenge me. But he is not aware of my strength. I'll show him what I am capable of.' Picking his *gedi* stick in hand, he climbed up the terrace. From the top of his cloud-capped palace he watched the dance of destruction. The Wind God was in spate. The arches and minarets of the palaces were smashed down. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! When two mighty bulls lock horns in fight many a small plant and tree get trampled. *Khama!*





(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The Wind God assaulted Asanapari. Gusts of wind broke upon the palaces of the city. Balo watched for a while. ‘O Wind God, don’t test my mettle. Come and face me if you dare,’ he cried. He wielded his gedi stick at the wind. The right hand of the Wind God broke. Balo brandished his stick twice and the legs of the God of Wind were fractured. With a thud the Wind God fell. He was rendered powerless. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Balo returned to Indrani. *Khama*! Balo broke the Wind God’s limbs. Sitting beside Indrani on a hindola he said, ‘Did you see how the Wind God tumbled down? How I immobilized him?’ May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! A helpless Wind God returned to Indar. Indar pondered for a while. ‘My rival has broken the limbs of my aide. I’ll be vulnerable without the Wind God by my side. I better abandon the idea of punishing the Pandav prince.’ *Khama*!

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VIYOR VELARO, THE KING

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Bhemo, the Pandav prince, said to his brothers, 'Balo Himmat is in the first flush of his youth. Parents of adolescent children should be watchful. A youthful boy may falter at times. He should be bound in wedlock in time. A timely action should be taken. Find him a match while it is not too late. The father who fails to fulfill his duties is at fault. O brothers, listen to what I say. Arjhan should find a match for his son.

(Tambur) O maharaj! Arjhan pondered for a while, 'Balo Himmat is no more a child. He is wooing Indar's wife. I should think about his nuptials. Perhaps my brother is right. My son should be tied in wedlock.' He sent for Dhofa. 'Listen to what I say,' said he, 'Balo is a strapping youth. We should get him a fair bride. Her parents should be our peers in strength and rank.' *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Bhemo said to Dhofa, 'You are worldly-wise. Suggest a suitable match for our son and we'll send a proposal.' 'Why don't you consider the daughter of King Viyor Velaro?⁵⁰ His daughter Antra⁵¹ is pretty and fair.' The Pandav brothers pondered for a while, 'Who should go with the proposal? Should we all go together?' 'Bhemo can carry out this task. He should go to get the consent of





King Viyor Velaro,' said Sadev, the Pandav prince. *Khama!* Bhemo was pleased with the prospect of going to Viyor Velaro's kingdom. He adorned himself in various ways. He donned a dhoti with golden lace. He dressed up in a groom's finery. He wore a golden crown and arrayed himself in befitting jewellery. He was bedecked with gold and silver ornaments. Picking a long staff, Bhemo set off for Verath Nagri.⁵² Hurriedly, he tore up the path. Raising clouds off dust, he walked along the road. He arrived at the outskirts of Verath Nagri. Bhemo waited for an auspicious sign. A vennag's call was heard to his left. 'This is not so favourable an omen,' thought Bhemo, 'This is not a good sign, I had better put off my visit to the king's court.' Bhemo thought of having some sweets. He went to the marketplace to eat *pakvan*. Viyor Velaro, the king, saw him in the marketplace. 'It is Bhemjhal, the Pandav,' he thought. The king went forward to greet him. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! Viyor Velaro, the king, greeted Bhemo and led him to his palace of clouds. A couch was laid for the royal guest. A tasseled silk mattress was spread on the couch. Bhemo took his seat on the couch. He engaged Viyor Velaro in small talk. The king had some water heated in a copper vessel. Bhemo's feet were washed in respect. *Khama!* (*Tambur*) O maharaj! Bhemo arrived in Verath Nagri and Viyor Velaro welcomed him warmly. The Pandavs were the first living Gods who walked on the surface of this earth. We sing in the praise of the Pandavs. The Pandavs are the tigers of this land. They shed light like lamps. (*Tambur*) O maharaj! Viyor Velaro had water heated in a golden vessel. Bhemo was helped with his bath. Bhemo adorned himself suitably. He seated himself on a high couch. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! Bhemo sat on a high couch and the king offered him a silver encrusted hookah. It was filled with the best hemp. The king said to his guest, 'O Pandav, for what great purpose have you come? From where are you coming and what is your destination?' 'I have come with a proposal. I seek the hand of your daughter for





our prince,' said Bhemo. 'For whose son do you seek an alliance?' asked Viyor Velaro, the king. 'I have come with a proposal for Balo Himmat, the son of Arjhan. He has entered his youth. Your princess is pretty and fair. They'll make a good couple.' 'You are a brood of five brothers. You do not have many kith and kin. How many people can you bring along in a wedding procession?' asked the king. Bhemo replied, 'True, we are a brood of five brothers. But we seek to have a worthy relative. You are our peer in rank and strength.' Viyor Velaro pondered for a while. 'O Bhemo, who would not like to have relatives as the Pandavs by marriage? You are the first living Gods on earth. But I would prefer a groom with a large family. I'll accept your proposal on one condition,' said he, 'I'll give you a jar full of mustard seeds. The number of guests accompanying the groom must match the number of seeds in the jar. Each guest should hold a seed in his fist. If you fail to fulfil this condition my daughter will not marry your son.'

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Bhemo pondered for a while. 'From where shall we amass so many people?' Nevertheless, he accepted the challenge. He tied the seeds in a knot in the corner of his *pachhedi*. He bade farewell to the king and left for Asanapari. 'The king has posed a difficult condition. From where shall we get people to match the number of mustard seeds? Viyor Velaro treated me well. He welcomed me with affection. But if we fail to take along the number of people he has asked for, he won't give us his daughter. That would be a nice way to reject a proposal!' reflected Bhemo. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! With hasty steps Bhemo returned to Asanapari. He went straight to the royal court and told his brothers about the king's condition. 'Surely, he is not interested,' said Dhofa to Kutma. *Khama*!

Water was heated in a copper vessel.

Water was heated in a copper vessel.

Water was heated for Bhemo.





Bhemo was helped with his bath.
 He was helped with his bath.
 Bhemo was offered a hot water bath by the king.

Bhemo donned a dhoti with golden lace.
 He donned a dhoti with golden lace.
 He dressed suitably.

Bhemo adorned himself in various ways.
 He adorned himself in various ways.
 He sat on a high couch.

Bhemo was offered a hookah by the king.
 He was offered a hookah by the king.
 He was offered a hookah filled with the best hemp.

‘Disclose the purpose of your visit,’ said Viyor Velaro, the king.
 ‘Disclose the purpose of your visit.
 What has brought you to our palace?’

‘I’ve come with a marriage proposal,’ said Bhemo.
 ‘I’ve come with a marriage proposal.
 I’ve come to ask for your daughter’s hand.’

The king of Verath Nagri said to Bhemo,
 The king of Verath Nagri said to Bhemo,
 ‘Listen to what I say.’

‘For whose son do you seek this match?
 For whose son do you seek this match?
 For whom do you want my daughter’s hand?’

‘Arjhan’s son is in the first flush of youth.
 Arjhan’s son is in the first flush of youth.





I've come for his nuptials.'

The king of Verath Nagri said again,
The king of Verath Nagri said again,
'Listen to what I say, O Bhemo.'

'Yours is not a large family.
Yours is not a large family.
I aspire for an influential relative.'

'You are a brood of only five brothers.
You are a brood of only five brothers.
You don't have many relations outside your kingdom.'

'Who will accompany you as guests at the wedding?
Who will accompany you as guests at the wedding?
How many people will attend the wedding?'

'Listen to what I say, O king,' said Bhemo.
'Listen to what I say.
With pomp and ceremony, we'll come.'

Viyor Velaro handed Bhemo a jar filled with mustard seeds.
He handed Bhemo a jar filled with mustard seeds.
A jar full of mustard seeds he gave to Bhemo.

'Bring as many people as there are seeds in this jar,' said the king.
'Bring as many people as there are seeds in this jar.
Give me your word that you'll match the number of seeds
in the jar.'

Bhemo left the palace of Viyor Velaro, the king.
He left the palace of Viyor Velaro, the king.
Hurriedly, he tore up the road.





Raising clouds of dust, he walked away.
Raising clouds of dust, he walked away.
He walked towards Asanapari.

Bhemo went straight to the royal court.
He went straight to the royal court.
He showed courtesy to his brothers.

The Pandav princes were discussing court matters.
They were discussing court matters.
The court was bustling with activity.

Jethodar, the eldest Pandav prince, said to Bhemo,
He said to Bhemo,
'Listen to what I say.'

'Impatiently, we have awaited your return.
Impatiently, we have awaited your return.
Tell us what Viyor Velaro said!'

Bhemo said to his brothers,
He said to his brothers,
'Viyor Velaro has laid an impossible condition.'

'He thinks that we are few in number.
He thinks that we are few in number.
He is not willing to wed his daughter to our son.'

Bhemo showed his brothers the mustard seeds.
He showed his brothers the mustard seeds.
He informed them about the king's condition.

Kutma and Dhofa were called upon.
Kutma and Dhofa were called upon.





The Pandavs were distressed.

Kasna Avtar was sent for.

Kasna Avtar was sent for.

The Pandavs were distraught.

Kasna Avtar pondered for a while.

Kasna Avtar pondered for a while.

'Listen to what I say, O Pandavs,' said he.

'We shall sow the mustard seeds,' said Avtar.

'We shall sow the mustard seeds.

We'll take along nine lakh people to attend the wedding.'

Bhemo untied the knot in his cloth.

He untied the knot in his cloth.

He gave the seeds to Avtar.

Kasna Avtar took a handful of seeds.

He took a handful of seeds.

He picked up a fistful of mustard seeds.

Kasna Avtar sowed the seeds in the northern fields.

Kasna Avtar sowed the seeds in the northern fields.

He beseeched nine lakh Gods and Goddesses to join in.

Avtar picked up a fistful of seeds again,

He picked up fistful of seeds once again,

And sowed them in Indrapuri.

Twelve Rain Gods and thirteen Lords of Thunder were invited.

Twelve Rain Gods and thirteen Lords of Thunder were invited.

Avtar invited the Gods of Indrapuri.





‘Grace the occasion of Balo’s wedding,’ said Avtar.
 ‘Grace the occasion of Balo’s wedding.
 Make haste, there is no time to delay.’

Avtar picked up the seeds for a third time.
 He picked up the seeds for a third time.
 He sowed them in the cosmic sphere.

Kasna Avtar invited one crore Brahmas.
 He invited one crore Brahmas.
 The Brahmas and their retinue were invited.

‘O Brahmas, do please attend the nuptials of our son.
 Do please attend the nuptials of our son.
 Bring along the book of *Sakro Véd*,’ said Avtar.

Picking up a fourth fist of mustard seeds,
 Picking up a forth fist of mustard seeds.
 Avtar invited Goddess Laxmi.

‘Come to the wedding with saffron and kumkum powder.
 Come to the wedding with saffron and kumkum powder.
 An invitation was extended to Laxmi, the Goddess.

Avtar gathered the seeds for a fifth time.
 He gathered the seeds for a fifth time.
 He scattered them in the field of Dudhiya Deval.

Nine lakh Goddesses were requested.
 Nine lakh Goddesses were requested.
 Hiru, Ranpu and other Goddesses were invited.

For the sixth time Avtar filled his fist.
 For the sixth time Avtar filled his fist.





In the netherworld he scattered them.

The fair and dark Bhairav brothers were beseeched.

The fair and dark Bhairav brothers were beseeched.

Avtar pressed the Bhairavs to come for the wedding.

Kasna Avtar picked the seeds for a seventh time.

He picked the seeds for a seventh time.

He scattered them in the fields on the southern side.

The Sun and the Moon were asked to come for the nuptials.

The Sun and the Moon were asked to come for the nuptials.

Avtar requested them to grace the occasion.

Invitations were sent all across the universe.

Invitations were sent all across the universe.

From over nine continents guests were invited.

Invitations were sent all around the world.

Invitations were sent all around the world.

Fistfuls of seeds were strewn all over the universe.

The Pandavs arranged for the nuptials of Balo Himmat.

They arranged for the nuptials of Balo Himmat.

Guests started pouring in from all directions.

Trumpets and conches blared.

Trumpets and conches blared.

A roll of drums crackled like thunderous clouds.

Guests arrived in great throngs.

Guests arrived in great throngs.

One after the other guests started pouring in.





With nine hundred and ninety-nine drums,
With nine hundred and ninety-nine drums,
Indar, the Lord of Gods, came from Indrapuri.

A group of a thousand *jognis* came to attend the wedding.
A group of a thousand *jognis* came to attend the wedding.
They arrived to attend the wedding of Balo.

Reciting the *Sakro Ved* turned up Brahma.
Reciting the *Sakro Ved* turned up Brahma.
Brahma graced the occasion with his presence.

Nine lakh Goddesses thronged Asanapari.
Nine lakh Goddesses thronged Asanapari.
They came to join the wedding procession.

The dark and the fair Bhairava,
The dark and the fair Bhairava,
They honoured the invitation of the Pandavs.

Kutma, the queen mother, said to Bhemo,
She said to Bhemo,
'Listen to what I say, O son.'

'We'll take the wedding procession to Verath Nagri.
We'll take the wedding procession to Verath Nagri.
We'll proceed to Verath Nagri for our son's wedding.'

'The place is quite far from here, O Bhemo.
The place is quite far from here.
We'll take six months to reach Verath Nagri.'

'You had better stay behind to mind our cattle, O Bhemo.
You had better stay behind to mind our cattle.'





Take good care of them while we are away.'

The wedding procession set off for Verath Nagri.

The wedding procession set off for Verath Nagri.

People of Asanapari were in revelry.

The womenfolk sang the customary songs.

The womenfolk sang the customary songs.

Dancers twirled around gleefully.

Musical instruments were played.

Musical instruments were played.

Sounds of shehnai and drums reverberated.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Kutma, the queen mother, said to Bhemo, 'Listen to what I say, O Bhemo. Verath Nagri is far away. The wedding procession may take six months to reach there. I want you to stay behind to look after our cloud-capped palaces and the herd of cattle. Even otherwise, you are fond of indulging in playful mischief. You are known for your habit of trouble making. It is better that you do not join the procession. I have left a seer of roasted gram for you. Watch over Asanapari till we return.' Bhemo pondered for a while, 'She has singled me out but I won't stay behind. I'll show her what I am capable of doing.' *(Tambur) O maharaj!* The wedding procession was about to leave for Verath Nagri. The womenfolk sang customary songs. The air resounded with the sounds of shehnai and drums. Dancers danced joyfully. The entertainers delighted people with various skills. Musical instruments were played. O, what revelry! *Khama!*

The Pandavs set off for Verath Nagri.

They set off for Verath Nagri.

They set out in a procession for their son's wedding.





Clouds of dust rose as they tore along the way.
 Clouds of dust rose as they tore along the way.
 Hurriedly, they proceeded for Verath Nagri.

They travelled across many a strange land.
 They travelled across many a strange land.
 They walked past many cities and villages.

Bhemo was left behind in Asanapari.
 He was left behind in Asanapari.
 He was left to watch the cattle.

Bhemo devoured his seer of roasted gram.
 He devoured a seer of roasted gram.
 He munched a seer of gram.

Bhemo set out for Verath Nagri.
 He set out for Verath Nagri.
 He took a different route to Verath Nagri.

Bhemo arrived at a banyan tree called Parag Vad.
 He arrived at a banyan tree called Parag Vad.
 He sat under the tree to cool off.

Kutma beheld him sitting under the tree.
 She beheld him sitting under the tree.
 'How did you reach here ahead of us?' asked she.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Kutma said to Bhemo, 'I had asked you to stay behind to keep watch over our cattle. How did you reach here ahead of us? I forbid you to come out from under the canopy of this banyan tree. Nine lakh deities reside in this tree. In the name of those deities, I forbid you





to step out from beneath the tree.’ The wedding procession resumed the journey, leaving Bhemo behind. Bhemo, the mighty Pandav, pondered for a while, ‘Mother has forbidden me to come out from under the canopy of the tree. But she does not know me. Without stepping out of the canopy, I can still move around. I’ll bear the tree upon me.’ He said to the tree, ‘Listen O Parag Vad, I’m going to pull you out. Loosen the grip of your roots lest they get damaged while I hoist you.’ Bhemo clasped the tree trunk with both his hands and heaved it clear of the ground. Bearing the tree on his crest, he took the way to Verath Nagri. Taking a different route, he reached the destination ahead of the wedding procession. The womenfolk of Verath Nagri were amused to see Bhemo bearing a tree on his crest. They sang customary banter of Bhemo and his strange headgear. *Khama!* The queen of Viyor Velaro asked Bhemo, ‘How many people are accompanying the bridegroom?’

‘More than nine lakh people are on their way, O queen.
More than nine lakh people are on their way.
Have you cooked enough food for them?’ asked Bhemo.

‘See for yourself, O Bhemo,’ said the queen.
‘See for yourself.
We have stocked enough food for everyone.’

The queen handed Bhemo the keys of the storehouses.
She handed Bhemo the keys of the storehouses.
Seven rooms were stuffed with delicacies.

Bhemo turned the keys and opened the storehouses.
He turned the keys and opened the storehouses.
He devoured all the cooked food.

‘Have you stored food in any other place as well?’





Have you stored food in any other place as well?
My hunger is not yet satisfied,' said he.

Bhemo went to the step-well after eating the food.
He went to the step-well after eating the food.
He drank all the water from the well.

Belching, Bhemo sat under a tree.
Belching, he sat under a tree.
He reclined against a tree to rest.

The wedding procession arrived at Verath Nagri.
The wedding procession arrived at Verath Nagri.
The procession arrived at the outskirts of Verath Nagri.

They encamped under the banyan and the pipal trees.
They encamped under the banyan and the pipal trees.
They awaited their relatives by marriage.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Bhemo devoured the food prepared for the guests. He consumed all the delicacies stored for the wedding. He said to the queen, 'I'm still hungry. Serve me more food.' The queen pondered for a while. 'He alone has devoured all the food cooked for the guests. What will happen when the entire wedding party arrives? From where shall I produce food? The king asked them to bring as many people as the mustard seeds in a jar. What will be my plight when all the guests arrive?' Her mouth became dry and she became tongue-tied. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Meanwhile, the wedding party arrived. They encamped on the outskirts. They rested under the trees. The guests thronged the streets and alleyways of the city. Coconut in hand, the Pandavs went to the palace of Viyor Velaro, the king. Bhemo sat

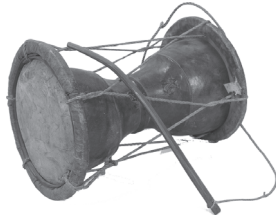




alone under the banyan tree. The queen said to the Pandavs, 'Listen to what I say. Here are some dry stalks of bajri, make a rope of it. We'll erect a wedding pandal using that rope.' Arjhan, Sadev and Nakro, the three Pandav brothers raced to Kasna Avtar. They told Kasna Avtar about the situation but Avtar could not solve the riddle. Kutma was listening to them. 'Go to Bhemo and request him to solve it for you,' suggested she. The Pandav brothers went to Bhemo and said, 'The queen will not accept our coconut unless we solve a riddle for her. Even Avtar has failed to decipher the meaning. We can't get Balo married without your help.' Bhemo pondered for a while. He took the coconut and went to the queen's palace. The queen asked him to make a rope from the dry stalks. 'We'll make a toran using that rope and then alone will your son be invited to honour the toran,' added she. Bhemo promptly replied, 'Fetch some water in a sieve so that I can sprinkle water on the stalks to make them tender.' The queen said, 'How can one fetch water in a sieve? It simply can't hold it.' Bhemo replied, 'If a sieve can't hold water then I can't make a rope out of dead stalks.' The queen was rendered speechless. Balo was invited for the toran ceremony. *Khama!*

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DISTRIBUTION OF LAND

One fine day an incident took place,
One fine day an incident took place,
Which turned out to be auspicious.

Daljhohjan spoke to his chieftains.
He spoke to his chieftains.
'Listen to what I say.'

'Fetch a quill and a paper, O chieftains.
Fetch a quill and a piece paper.
Bring a quill and a piece of paper for me.'

Daljhohjan wrote a letter to Kasna Avtar.
He wrote a letter to Kasna Avtar.
'O Lord, please contemplate on my request.'

'Divide the land between my cousins and me, O Lord.
Divide the land between my cousins and me.
Allot us our fair shares.'

Wrapping a gold coin in a betel leaf,
Wrapping a gold coin in a betel leaf,
Daljhohjan rolled a biro of it.





Daljhojhan tied the biro of the leaf to his spear.
He tied the biro of the leaf to his spear.
He wanted to send Avtar a message.

He took a bow twelve cubits long.
He took a bow twelve cubits long.
He placed the spear on the bow string.

‘O spear, go straight to Vaikunthpuri,’ said Daljhojhan.
‘O spear, go straight to Vaikunthpuri.
In the blink of an eye, fly across to Kasna Avtar’s court.’

Daljhojhan pulled back the string of his bow.
He pulled back the string of his bow.
The spear headed for the land of Avtar.

The royal court of Avtar was in a flurry of activity.
The royal court of Avtar was in a flurry of activity.
The deities were engrossed in relating tales of bravery.

The spear landed at the centre of the court.
It landed at the centre of the court.
At the heart of the court, Daljhojhan’s spear fell.

Startled Gods jumped to their feet.
Startled Gods jumped to their feet.
‘Who could have shot such a massive spear?’

Avtar picked up the leaf tied to the tip of the spear.
He picked up the leaf tied to the tip of the spear.
He opened the message from Daljhojhan.

‘I request you to divide the land among my cousins and me.’
read Kasna Avtar.





‘I request you to divide the land among my cousins and me.
Draw a clear line of division.’

‘We need to go to Dhavlo Gadh, O Narad,’ said Avtar.

‘We need to go to Dhavlo Gadh.

I must draw a line of division.’

Avtar set out for Dhavlo Gadh.

He set out for Dhavlo Gadh.

Along with Narad, he took the way to Dhavlo Gadh.

Avtar and his companion,

Avtar and his companion,

They arrived at the marketplace of Dhavlo Gadh.

The Kaurav princes were busy playing a game of dice.

They were busy playing a game of dice.

None cared to welcome Avtar and Narad.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

The Kaurav princes were busy playing a game of dice. Avtar and Narad arrived at the outskirts of Dhavlo Gadh. ‘You told me O Lord,’ said Narad, ‘that the Kaurav brothers will extend a ceremonious welcome to us. You said that they’ll welcome us with the beating of drums and put auspicious *tilak* marks on our foreheads. But I don’t see a single Kaurav around. Nor have they cared to send someone to lead us to their court. You said that they’d cook several sweet dishes and delicacies for us but no one really seems to care for your arrival.’ Kasna Avtar went straight to the court of Daljhojhan. ‘You sent me a message, O Kaurav chief,’ said Avtar, ‘I’ve come here to resolve your dispute.’ Daljhojhan replied, ‘The Pandavs and we, the Kaurav brothers, are first cousins. Our fathers were brothers. Draw a line of demarcation for us so that we can rule over our respective





lands in peace. Be just and fair while you divide the land. Assign the reign of five continents to us, the Pandavs should be given power over only one continent.' Kasna Avtar was furious at this. 'I'll show you what I am capable of doing, O Daljhojhan,' thought he.

'Listen intently to what I say, O Kaurav princes.

Listen intently to what I say.

Lend me your ear,' said Avtar.

'I'll divide the land between you and your cousins.

I'll divide the land between you and your cousins.

I'll be fair and just in my decision.'

'The region of Abu should be given to the Pandavs.

The region of Abu should be given to the Pandavs.

The Pandavs should rule over Abu.'

'The southern continent will belong to the Pandavs.

The southern continent will belong to the Pandavs.

The land in the south should belong to them.'

'Polo and Pader regions of Rajasthan,

Polo and Pader regions of Rajasthan,

Alongwith the land of Mewad, should be given to them.'

The Kaurav brothers were infuriated.

The Kaurav brothers were infuriated.

Daljhojhan trembled with anger as Kasna Avtar

divided the land.

'Listen to what I say, O Kasna Avtar.

Listen to what I say.

Lend me your ear,' said Daljhojhan.





'You walked into my kingdom, O Kasma Avtar.
You walked into my kingdom.
But you won't be able to walk out without my permission.'

The Kaurav brothers wielded hefty staffs at Avtar.
They wielded hefty staffs at Avtar.
They attacked Kasma Avtar with heavy sticks.

Narad was scared to the core.
He was scared to the core.
He trembled as the Kauravs beat Avtar.

The Kauravs were infuriated.
They were infuriated.
They pounced on Avtar.

'Why did you assign four continents to our rivals?
Why did you assign four continents to our rivals?
You have done injustice to us,' said they.

Kasma Avtar left Dhavlo Gadh behind.
He left Dhavlo Gadh behind.
He set out for Asanapari.

Kutma said to the Pandav princes,
She said to the Pandav princes,
'Listen to what I say, O sons.'

'Avtar is coming this way, O sons.
He is coming this way.
He is coming as our guest.'

'Turn up the faces of the drums at once, O sons,' said Kutma.
'Turn up the faces of the drums at once.'





Welcome Avtar with the beating of drums.'

With lighted lamps, the Pandavs went to welcome Avtar.

With lighted lamps, the Pandavs went to welcome Avtar.

They went out to Suraj Pol.

The Pandavs prostrated before Avtar.

They prostrated before Avtar.

They knelt and bowed in humility.

Avtar was extended a ceremonious welcome.

He was extended a ceremonious welcome.

The Pandavs welcomed him with warmth and affection.

They ushered Avtar to the palace of clouds.

They ushered Avtar to the palace of clouds.

To the cloud-capped palace they led Kasna Avtar.

Green and yellow rugs were spread.

Green and yellow rugs were spread.

On the tasseled rugs Narad and Avtar were seated.

They served Avtar in many ways.

They served Avtar in many ways.

They offered him gugal incense.

Kutma prepared thirty-two kinds of delicacies.

She prepared thirty-two kinds of delicacies.

For Avtar she cooked savoury dishes.

'These palaces of clouds belong to whom?' asked Avtar.

'These palaces of clouds belong to whom?

Who is the ruler of the throne of Asanapari?'





‘The cloud-capped palaces are yours, O Avtar,’ said the Pandavs.

‘The cloud-capped palaces are yours.

You are the ruler of our kingdom.’

‘I’ve assigned you the reign of the region of Abu.

I’ve assigned you the reign of Abu region.

O Pandavs, henceforth it belongs to you,’ said Avtar.

‘You’ll rule over the southern continent.

You’ll rule over the southern continent.

You’ll be sovereigns of four continents.’

‘Rule over your land in a just and fair manner.

Rule over your land in a just and fair manner.

Time will fly by but your name will remain immortal.’

‘The years will flow by but people will remember your names.

The years will flow by but people will remember

your names.

The tales of your exploits will be narrated forever,’

said Avtar.

Kutma served Kasma Avtar thirty-two dishes on a golden salver.

Kutma served Kasma Avtar thirty-two dishes on a golden salver.

On a golden salver Avtar was served.

‘Do justice to the food, O Avtar,’ said Kutma.

‘Do justice to the food.

We’re honoured by your presence.’

‘Listen to what I say, O mother,’ said Avtar.

‘Listen to what I say.

I want to tell you something close to my heart.’





‘Whose sons are the Pandavs, O mother?’ asked Avtar.

‘Whose sons are the Pandavs?’

Who has sired the Pandav princes?’

‘They are the offsprings of *Sat*, O Avtar.

They are the offsprings of *Sat*.

Truth has sired them.’

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Bhasha





GETTING PREPARED FOR BHARATH

The Cloak of Fire and the Mighty Bow and Arrow

Kasna Avtar spoke to the Pandav princes,
He spoke to the Pandav princes,
'Listen to what I say.'

'A great war is impending, O Pandavs.
A great war is impending.
Be prepared for the Bharath.'

'Get a shield made of rhino skin, O Pandavs.
Get a shield made of rhino skin.
Get it from the netherworld.'

'From Gokul Gadh, O Pandav princes,
From Gokul Gadh,
Fetch a mighty bow and arrow.'

'Get a cloak of fire, O Pandavs,
Get a cloak of fire.
These items will make you invincible in war.'

Kutma said to Balo,





She said to Balo,
'Accompany me to Gokul Gadh to fetch the arrow and bow.'

Kutma and her grandson,
Kutma and her grandson,
They tore along the way to Gokul Gadh.

They arrived at Suraj Pol.
They arrived at Suraj Pol.
They stood at Suraj Pol in Gokul Gadh.

Kutma spoke to the guard of the Pol,
She spoke to the guard of the Pol,
'Listen to what I say.'

'Open the gates of your Pol, O guard,
Open the gates of your Pol.
I've come to meet your king.'

The guard hurriedly went to the court.
He hurriedly went to the court.
He stood at the royal court.

He bowed to Karan, the king,
He bowed to Karan, the king.
'An elderly dame has come to see you,' said he.

'Take the fire cloak for her, O guard.
Take the fire cloak for her.
Respectfully, give her the cloak,' said the king.

The guard took the cloak of fire.
He took the cloak of fire.
He handed it to Kutma.





Kutma wrapped the cloak with care.
She wrapped the cloak with care.
She fastened the cloak around her waist.

Karan came and knelt down.
He came and knelt down.
He prostrated at the feet of Kutma.

Kutma nestled Karan's head in her lap.
She nestled Karan's head in her lap.
She hugged and embraced him.

Kutma pressed him to her bosom.
She pressed him to her bosom.
She showered on him motherly affection.

Karan spoke to Kutma,
He spoke to Kutma,
'After a long time we've met, O mother.'

They talked about sweet and bitter tidings.
They talked about sweet and bitter tidings.
Kutma spoke gently to her son.

'You are the sovereign of Gokul Gadh, O son.
You are the sovereign of Gokul Gadh.
But you are a brother of the Pandavs.'

'The young son of Arjhan weeps and wails, O son.
The young son of Arjhan weeps and wails.
He is asking you for a favour.'

'What does he want, O mother?' asked Karan.
'What does he want?





Why is he so upset?’

‘He has heard about your mighty bow and arrow, O son.

He has heard about your mighty bow and arrow.

He wants to feel them,’ said Kutma.

Karan gave his bow and arrow to Balo.

He gave his bow and arrow to Balo.

He let Balo fondle the pair of arrow and bow.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Balo wept and wailed before Karan, the king of Gokul Gadh. Karan asked Kutma why the child was wailing. Kutma replied, ‘Listen to what I say, O son. Everyday the child plays with a toy bow. But today he came to know about your mighty bow and arrow.’ Karan took pity on the child. He said, ‘My archer’s set is not a plaything. You can hold it for a while, but do not wander off very far from here with my bow and arrow.’ Balo thankfully took the set of bow and arrow from Karan. Playing with them, he came to the marketplace. From there he moved to Suraj Pol. Kutma said to Karan, ‘I am worried about the child. I’ll go and find out where he has gone and what he is doing.’ With hasty steps she went after Balo. With the shroud of fire and the mighty bow and arrow, they made for Asanapari. Karan, the king, waited for them in his palace of clouds. Kutma and Balo hurriedly arrived in Asanapari. Kasna Avtar said, ‘We have obtained the mighty bow and the shroud of fire. Let’s try to obtain the other items as well.’ *Khama!*

The Tower of Victory

Kasna Avtar spoke to the Pandav princes.

He spoke to the Pandav princes.

‘Listen to what I say.’





'A great war is impending, O Pandavs.

A great war is impending.

You should be prepared for the war.'

'Obtain the Tower of Victory before the war begins,

Obtain the Tower of Victory before the war begins.

The Tower of Victory you must get.'

Jethodar, the eldest Pandav prince, spoke to his brothers.

Jethodar, the eldest Pandav prince, spoke to his brothers.

'Who will fetch the Tower of Victory for us?'

'Make haste, we can't afford to delay,' said he.

'Make haste, we can't afford to delay.

Make haste, there is no time to delay.'

Nakro and Sadev came forward.

Nakro and Sadev came forward.

They prepared to get the Tower of Victory.

Kutma, the queen mother, spoke to them,

Kutma, the queen mother, spoke to them,

'Be alert on your way.'

'You'll come across a weird place.

You'll come across a weird place.

You'll pass through a land of men with one leg.'

'Take the advice of your bhabhi before you leave.

Take the advice of your bhabhi before you leave.

She'll tell you how this feat can be accomplished.'

Weeping and wailing, Nakro went to Hodra.

Weeping and wailing, he went to Hodra.





He sat by his bhabhi and lamented.

‘Why are you in such a tantrum?’ asked Hodra.

‘Why are you in such a tantrum?’

What ails you so?’

‘Be calm and composed, O Nakro.

Be calm and composed.

Tell me what ails you so?’

‘I have to travel through a land of one-legged people, O bhabhi.

I have to travel through a land of one-legged people.

How do we go past such a land?’⁵³

Hurriedly, they tore up the path.

Hurriedly, they tore up the path.

They arrived at Manek Chawk with hasty steps.

They arrived in Manek Chawk.

They arrived in Manek Chawk.

They came with the Tower of Victory.

Jethodar, the Pandav prince, spoke to his brother.⁵⁴

He spoke to his brother.

‘Listen to what I say, O Bhemo.’

Rhino of the Netherworld

Kasna Avtar spoke to the Pandav princes.

He spoke to the Pandav princes.

‘Listen to what I say.’

‘A shield made of the hide of a rhino of the netherworld,

O Pandavs,





A shield made of the hide of a rhino of the netherworld,
Fetch the skin of a rhino of the netherworld.'

'There is no time for delay, O Pandavs.
There is no time for delay.
Get a shield made of the skin of a rhino immediately.'

The Pandavs scratched the earth with their toe-nails.
The Pandavs scratched the earth with their toe-nails.
Crestfallen, they looked at one another.

A roll of betel leaf was fashioned.
A roll of betel leaf was fashioned.
A biro of betel leaf was prepared for circulation.

The biro was circulated in court.
The biro was circulated in court.
No one was willing to thrust one's hand at it.

Arjhan, the Pandav prince, picked the biro.
He picked the biro.
He took up the challenge.

(An accompanist: He's ready to go to the netherworld. The lead singer: *Khama!*)

Arjhan is a valiant warrior.
He is a valiant warrior.
He has made his name immortal.

Long live Arjhan, the Pandav prince.
Long live Arjhan, the Pandav prince.
Glory be to the mother who bore him!

Arjhan prepared for the journey.





He prepared for the journey.

He yoked the bullocks to the carriage.

He set out on the journey to the netherworld.

He set out on the journey to the netherworld.

Hurriedly, he tore up the path to paataal.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

‘Get a shield made from the hide of a rhino of the netherworld,’ said Kasma Avtar, ‘Make haste, there is no time to delay.’ The Pandav princes pondered for a while. They bowed their heads. They scratched the earth with their toe-nails. ‘Who would risk his life by venturing into the netherworld to fetch a shield?’ they thought. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* A betel leaf was fashioned and circulated in court. It was time to put valour to the test. The timid ones turn their backs, the valiant fight back fiercely. Arjhan took up the challenge. Dhofa spoke a few words of wisdom to him, ‘Go straight to the netherworld and accomplish your task. Do not linger or loiter around unnecessarily in paataal.’ *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Arjhan prepared for a journey to the netherworld. He harnessed the bullocks to his carriage. He turned to his brothers and said, ‘Don’t worry about me. I won’t return without accomplishing the task. I bid you farewell till I come back.’ *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Asanapari was agitated. Arjhan, the Pandav prince, set out to fetch a shield made from the hide of a rhino. Arjhan whipped his white bullocks and the bullocks took flight. He took the way to the netherworld. Raising clouds of dust, he travelled along the path. He travelled at the speed of lightning. He reached the netherworld in a flash. *Khama!* Arjhan disembarked, unyoked his bullocks and tied them to a tree trunk. He sauntered along the shores of the lake. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Arjhan ambled around the Kanogar lake. He strained his eyes to trace the trail of the rhinos.





Arjhan reached the netherworld.
He reached the netherworld.
In the blink of an eye he reached paataal.

Arjhan stopped his carriage by the Kanogar lake.
He stopped his carriage by the Kanogar lake.
At the banks of the lake he stopped his carriage.

Arjhan ambled around the lake.
He ambled around the lake.
He looked for the trail of the rhinos.

Arjhan saw the tracks of the rhinos.
He saw the tracks of the rhinos.
He stopped by the path frequented by the rhinos.

Arjhan dug some pits in the ground.
He dug some pits in the ground.
He laid pairs of snares around.

Arjhan put up a hide.
He put up a hide.
With a bow and arrow in hand he took up his position.

Jeevta! Bhalai!

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Arjhan looked around for signs of the rhinos. He saw the tracks of the rhinos. He went along their trail. He laid some snares around. He put up a hide for himself. With his bow and arrow in hand, Arjhan sat alert inside the hide. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* At around noon, Nepji, the caretaker of the rhinos, arrived with his herd. Prodding and urging the rhinos, he drove them to the lake. He led them to





the Kanogar lake.

The caretaker of the rhinos,
The caretaker of the rhinos,
He drove the rhinos to the lake.

The rhinos of the netherworld,
The rhinos of the netherworld,
They came down to the lake to drink water.

The rhinos quenched their thirst.
The rhinos quenched their thirst.
Turning, they climbed the banks of the lake.

Holding his staff tightly, Nepji followed the herd.
Holding his staff tightly, Nepji followed the herd.
He prodded them to climb.

Alert and agile, Arjhan watched them from inside the hide.
Alert and agile, Arjhan watched them from inside the hide.
He watched the animals closely from inside the hide.

Arjhan aimed at the largest animal leading the herd.
He aimed at the largest animal leading the herd.
He shot his arrow at the leader.

Nepji, the caretaker, pondered for a while.
Nepji, the caretaker, pondered for a while.
'Who has the gall to strike at my animal?'

'Ill has been done in the world,' thought he.
'Ill has been done in the world.
The lead rhino has been killed.'





Infuriated Nepji trembled with rage.
 Infuriated Nepji trembled with rage.
 He turned copper red with anger.

Arjhan stepped out of his hiding place,
 Arjhan stepped out of his hiding place,
 From his hiding place, he came out.

Nepji brandished his long staff at Arjhan.
 He brandished his long staff at Arjhan.
 He split Arjhan's skull in two.

Arjhan lay dead on the ground.
 He lay dead on the ground.
 The caretaker of the rhino had killed him with his staff.

A son had killed his father in a fit of anger.
 A son had killed his father in a fit of anger.
 Arjhan, the Pandav prince, lay dying on the ground.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Arjhan aimed for the leader of the herd. He pulled back the string of his bow and shot an arrow with all his might. The largest of the rhinos was shot dead. Nepji, the caretaker, pondered, 'Who had the gal to kill my rhino? The leader of the herd is dead. Ill has been done in the world.' Arjhan stepped out of his hiding place. Nepji trembled with rage. He came forward and swung his staff at Arjhan. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Arjhan's skull split into two. He fell to the ground and died. Unknowingly, a son had killed his father. The netherworld was in turmoil. A son had killed his father. He had committed a heinous sin.





(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! After grazing his rhinos, Nepji returned home. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Nepji returned to his house. He told his mother about his exploit, 'Listen, O mother, today a stranger intruded in the lake. He killed the leader of our herd. He wanted to take away the hide. I got hold of him and split his skull.' *Khama*!

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Hirapath was distraught to hear the news. 'Ill has been done in the world,' thought she. 'You have erred on this side of world, O son. None dares to come to the netherworld. Only a man of valour can intrude here. You must have assaulted my husband. None else can come to *paataal* to accomplish a task. He must be my prince from Asanapari.' Nepji stood aghast. He led his mother to the lake. He took her to the place where he had killed the stranger with his staff. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Hirapath beheld the corpse of Arjhan from a distance. She saw his deep, strong chest and arms like the branches of the banyan. His bushy moustache spread across his face and his body looked like the highest summit of Mount Abu. Tears coursed down the cheeks of Hirapath. *Khama*!

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Hirapath wept and wailed. Tears streamed down her eyes like monsoon rain. 'Ill has been done in the world, O son. He is not a stranger to the netherworld. He is your father.' *Khama*!

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DECLARATION OF WAR

One fine day an incident took place,
One fine day an incident took place,
Which turned out to be auspicious.

Daljhojhan spoke to his chieftains,
He spoke to his chieftains,
'Listen to what I say.'

'Fetch a pen and a paper, O chieftains.
Fetch a pen and a paper.
Bring a pen and a paper to me.'

He wrapped a gold coin in a betel leaf.
He wrapped a gold coin in a betel leaf.
Daljhojhan tied it at his spear-tip.

He took a bow twelve cubits long.
He took a bow twelve cubits long.
He put the spear on the bow string.

'O spear, go straight to Asanapari,' said Daljhojhan.
'O spear, go straight to Asanapari.
In a flash, fly across to the Pandav court.'





Daljhojhan drew his bowstring back.
He drew his bowstring back.
The spear headed for the land of the Pandav princes.

The royal court of the Pandavs was in session.
The royal court of the Pandavs was in session.
They were engrossed in relating tales of bravery.

The spear landed in the centre of the court.
It landed in the centre of the court.
In the centre of the court, Daljhojhan's spear fell.

'Be prepared for a fierce war, O Pandavs.
Be prepared for a fierce war.
Avtar has denied us our fair share.'

(Tambur) O maharaj!

The Pandavs were the first living Gods who walked on the surface of this earth. Others were mortal men. The message of Daljhojhan was circulated in court. The Pandav princes opened the biro and read the message in turns. The Pandav brothers pondered for a while, 'Arjhan has not returned from the netherworld and Daljhojhan has declared war.' The four Pandav brothers looked at one another. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* 'Ill has been done in the world. This is the time to put one's valour to test. The timid ones will turn their backs but the valiant will fight back fiercely,' thought the Pandav princes, 'Our indomitable warrior-brother is not around.' Their heads hung low. They started scratching the earth with their toe-nails. The assembly of the Pandavs felt despondent and weighed down. None dared to utter a sound. 'Who will lead the army at the great battle of Bharath? Who will take up the challenge posed by Daljhojhan?' The four Pandav brothers were at a loss for words.





(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The young son of Arjhan was trying to amuse himself in the palace of clouds. But he had no playmates. He said to his mother, 'It's so dull within the four walls of this palace. I want to go to the marketplace to play with my friends.' Hodra replied, 'It is not wise to play in the streets when a war is looming. I won't let you go out to play in the marketplace.' *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Balo Himmat was an obstinate child. The mother gave in to his demand. A child and a king, they will surely have their way. With a golden ball and silver stick in hand, Balo descended the palace of clouds. He headed for the marketplace. Walking past the royal court, he strained his ears to catch the conversation. But the court was shrouded in gloom. 'The Pandav court is always so busy. I have observed various tales of exploits being discussed. But why is it under a pall today?' thought the child prince. He ventured close to find the reason. *Khama!* May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

Balo pricked up his ears to listen.

He pricked up his ears to listen.

He tried to catch the sounds of the royal court.

Gloom shrouded the court.

Gloom shrouded the court.

A pall had descended on the royal court of the Pandavs.

The Pandav brothers scratched the earth with their toes.

They scratched the earth with their toes.

They looked distraught and disparaged.

Balo asked over and again.

He asked over and again.

He tried to learn the reason of their grief.





‘Why are you in distress, O uncles?’ said he.

‘Why are you in distress?

What ails you so?’

‘Why does a pall of gloom linger over the court, O uncles?

Why does a pall of gloom linger over the court?

Who has tried to strip our honour?’

Bhemo spoke to the child prince.

He spoke to the child prince.

‘Don’t bother your little head over court matters.’

‘You are still a stripling, O son,’ said Bhemo.

‘You are still a stripling.

Go and play with your playmates.’

Balo asked over and again.

He asked over and again.

He tried to learn the reason for their grief.

Jeevta! Bhalai!

(Tambur) O maharaj!

As Balo walked past the court he found it in utter silence. He pondered for a while. He went to the court to find out the reason for the distress. He found his uncles upset and agitated. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* ‘The Pandavs are the first living Gods to walk on the surface of the earth. Others are mortals, O uncles,’ said Balo, ‘Why do you look so distraught? What really ails the Pandav princes? Has anyone slighted you? Has anyone doubted our honour?’

(Tambur) O maharaj! ‘Don’t bother your little head over serious matters. This is no child talk. Go and play with your playmates.





Keep your nose clear of court matters,’ said Bhemo. *Khama!* Balo looked around in the court. He caught sight of the gold coin and the biro of betel leaf. He picked up the leaf and read the message. ‘Accept our greetings, we wish you all prosperity. Be prepared for a great war,’ read Balo. The leaf was sprinkled with drops of blood. It was a time to put one’s valour to test. The timid ones would turn their backs but the valiant would fight back fiercely. Balo read the message and pondered for a while. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Balo Himmat picked the biro and unrolled it. He read the message written in blood. He ran his fingers over his moustache. His deep eyes smouldered with defiance as he read. ‘O Pandavs, face us in the battlefield or step down from the throne of Asanapari.’ Balo read Daljhojhan’s threat. Blood rushed to the young prince’s eyes. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* He said to his uncles, ‘Why should such an empty threat fluster you? This is a time to prove our mettle.’ He put the biro in his mouth and chewed it vehemently. He turned to Bhemo, the mighty Pandav, ‘The valiant ones are the tigers of the land. They shed light as lamps. When they die even trees shed their leaves. Their deaths are mourned by all. This is a time to prove your valour. Why do you hesitate to take the lead?’ (*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* A mother should give birth only to worthy and valiant offsprings or her motherhood is a waste. Balo said to his uncle, ‘I’m not afraid of the Kaurav army. I’ll take up the challenge to fight the great war of Bharath. The Kauravs are no mightier than a flock of crows. I wonder why you have qualms about facing them on the battlefield. The word ‘war’ kindles a fire in me.’

The nephew spoke to his uncle.

He spoke to his uncle.

‘Listen to what I say, O uncle Bhemo.’

‘Tie a *rakhri* around my wrist.





Tie a rakhri around my wrist.
I want to fight in the battle of Bharath.'

The uncle and his nephew,
The uncle and his nephew,
Thus they conversed with each other.

Bhemo said to Balo,
He said to Balo,
'Listen to what I say, O son.'

'You are still a stripling.
You are still a stripling.
Better not fancy a fight in Bharath.'

(An accompanist: Don't call me a child, O uncle. The lead singer: *Khama!*)

'I'm no more a child, O uncle.
I'm no more a kid,
Prepare a *pat* for my success.'

'O son, one needs to break through the wheel of death.
One needs to break through the wheel of death.
One needs to breach through seven formidable formations.'

'One can't breach the seven circular arrays, O son.
One can't breach the seven circular arrays.
Without a guru, one cannot pass through it.'

'I've learnt the secrets of the army formation, O uncle.
I've learnt the secret of the arrays.
I learnt it when I was in my mother's womb.'

'I can breach the first six formations, O uncle.'





I can breach the first six formations.

The secret of the seventh one is unknown to me.'

'I'll manage the seventh one, O son,' said Bhemo.

'I'll manage the seventh one.

The seventh formation of dung shall be broken by me.'

Thus the uncle and his nephew,

Thus the uncle and his nephew,

They talked about the strategies of war.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Bhemo said to Balo, 'Listen to what I say. O son. The Bharath is not an ordinary war. It is a fierce war of strategies. How can merely five of us take on seventy-eight Kauravs and that too in the absence of Arjhan? The great war of Bharath is not for children like you.' 'O uncle, listen to what I say,' said Balo, 'Didn't I tell you that I don't consider the Kauravs mightier than dogs and crows? Arrange for the rite of *pat* worship. And tie a rakhri around my wrist. Turn upwards the faces of the drums and sound the drum beats to declare the war. Let the whole world know that the scion of the Pandavs has taken up the challenge.' *Khama! Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Balo was excited to hear the word 'war'. Bhemo said to him, 'O son, listen. Listen intently to what I say. We can't go to war without your father. Bharath is a war of strategies. We need to breach seven formidable formations. Only Arjhan knows the secret of the wheel of death. Without the knowledge of this strategy, we can't win the battle. Don't be obstinate, return to your palace.'

(Tambur) O maharaj! Balo said with pride, 'Listen to what I say, O uncle. Though I am still a child, I'm not born in a family of brahmans or banias. I'm the son of a warrior king. And I learnt the secrets of the circular arrangement of troops when I was in my mother's womb.





I know how to breach the first six mazes. If you help me break through the seventh maze, we will vanquish our enemy.' *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* 'You are boasting, aren't you, O son?' said Bhemo, 'Do you indeed know the secret of the wheel of death?' 'Why should I speak a lie in a moment of crisis, O uncle?' said the scion of the family, 'I memorized every word spoken by my mama, Kasna Avtar, when he recited the secret of the maze to my mother. But mother drifted off to sleep and mama ceased to narrate and so I couldn't learn the secret of the seventh maze of dung.' Bhemo said with delight, 'O son, you are really a child prodigy. I am no longer afraid of the war. The breach of the seventh maze is not so intimidating. I'll do that in an instant.' The Pandavs were elated. They arranged for the worship of pat. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* The Pandav princes performed the rite of pat. They tied a rakhri around the wrist of Balo. Bhemo turned up the face of the war drum. He beat the drum to announce the war. The arches of the palaces shook as he beat on the mighty drum. The arches of the palaces of the kingdom of the Kauravs shook with the resounding drumbeats. The sound reverberated in Vaikunthpuri. The mother of the child prince heard the sound. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Hodra was dazed to hear the drum sounds. She pondered for a while, 'Why is there such a flurry in the absence of my Arjhan? Why the beating of war drums?' Hurriedly, she descended from the palace of clouds. She raced to the royal court of the Pandavs. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

Hodra strode into the royal court.

She strode into the royal court.

Hurriedly, she marched into the royal court.

Hodra stood in a corner.

She stood in a corner.





She stood in a corner of the royal court.

The Pandavs were worshipping the pat.

They were worshipping the pat.

They had tied a rakhri round the wrist of Balo.

Hodra spoke to her brothers-in-law.

She spoke to her brothers-in-law.

'Listen to what I say.'

'You've made my son a scapegoat.

You've made my son a scapegoat.

You have instigated my child to fight.'

The mother of the child prince,

The mother of the child prince,

She cursed her husband's siblings.

Bhalai! Jeevta!

Hodra wept and wailed.

She wept and wailed.

She cried bitterly.

'He is my only son, O brothers-in-law,' said she.

'He is my only son.

My life lingers on him.'

'You've incited my child to war.

You've incited my child to war.

He is still a child to handle such a matter.'

(An accompanist: His father is away from home. The lead singer:

Khama!)





‘His father is away from home,’ said she.
‘His father is away from home.
Such unfortunate things happen in this world.’

Balo spoke to his mother,
He spoke to his mother,
‘Listen to what I say.’

‘Don’t blame my uncles and cousins, O mother.
Don’t blame my uncles and cousins.
Don’t curse your husband’s siblings.’

‘I’m no longer a kid in a cradle, O mother.
I’m no longer a kid in a cradle.
I’m not a brahman’s son.’

‘As soon as he sees the light, O mother,
As soon as he sees the light,
A warrior’s son can wield a dagger.’

‘Even if I die on the battlefield, O mother,
Even if I die on the battlefield,
My name will become immortal.’

‘Cowards die many times before their death.
Cowards die many times before their death.
Only the valiant taste it once.’

Bhalai! Jeevta!

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Hodra arrived in the royal court of the Pandavs. The Pandav brothers were busy in the worship of pat. They had tied a rakhri on Balo’s





wrist. Hodra beheld her son sitting by the pat. Streams of tears coursed down her cheeks. Weeping and wailing, she said to her brothers-in-law, 'You have erred on this side of the world.' *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! Hodra said, 'O my brothers-in-law, I condemn you for inciting my son into war. You have done ill in the world. He is my only son. My existence lingers on him. Why did you drag him into a fierce war like Bharath? How could you think of sacrificing my son?' She turned to Balo and said, 'How many times have I told you not to go to the royal court? They incited you into the business of war. They made you thrust your hand at the biro.' *Khama!* Balo said to his mother, 'Don't curse my uncles and cousins. I am not a toddler that I have to ask for your permission to venture out of the house. I was not born in a lineage of brahmans or banias. A true warrior's son can wield the sword right from his cradle. I dare to stare straight into the eyes of death.' *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! 'O mother,' said Balo, 'The valiant are the tigers of the land. They shed light like lamps. Their births are announced by the banging of golden disks. Sweets and dry dates are distributed on their advent on earth. They are not like the pampered children in a family of brahmans or banias. Your son is not a coward. The very word 'war' sets my body on fire.' *Khama!*

On an auspicious day,
On an auspicious day,
The Sun shone brightly over Asanapari.

Asanapari was in a flurry.
It was in a flurry.
A flurry of activity took place in Asanapari.

The war drum resounded like thundering clouds.
It resounded like thundering clouds.





The whole town was in a flurry.

The great war was declared.

The great war was declared.

Bharath was announced with a bang of the drum.

This is a tale of the great war of Bharath.

This is a tale of the great war of Bharath.

The brave and dauntless were eager to prove their mettle.

A child prince picked the biro of Bharath.

A child prince picked the biro of Bharath.

He put his elders to shame.

Hodra spoke to the Pandav brothers.

She spoke to the Pandav brothers.

‘Listen to what I say.’

‘You have shoved him into the jaws of death.

You have shoved him into the jaws of death.

Ill has been done in the world.’

‘He is yet to taste the pleasures of life.

He is yet to taste the pleasures of life.

He hasn’t enjoyed nuptial bliss.’

‘You will be condemned for his death.

You will be condemned for his death.

My son is yet to relish the joys of life.’

Everyone is not blessed to be a martyr.

Everyone is not blessed to be a martyr.

Only the truly valiant can make their names immortal.





(Tambur) O maharaj!

On a very auspicious day a narrator narrates the story and the entire court listens to him intently. This is a tale of the exploits of brave and righteous people. Musical instruments were played. The war drum sounded like a thunder storm. Asanapari was bustling about. *Khama!* Hodra said to her brothers-in-law, 'My son is yet to taste married bliss. If he dies in the war, you will be condemned.' She turned on her heels and hurriedly went to Kutma's palace. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* 'O mother-in-law,' said she, 'Ill has been done in the world. If the prince dies without celebrating his nuptials, a heinous sin will have been committed. We shall be condemned to hell.' *Khama!*

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EPISODE OF ANTRA, THE PRINCESS

Hodra spoke to her mother-in-law.

She spoke to her mother-in-law.

‘Listen to what I say.’

‘Ill will be done if the prince dies in battle.

Ill will be done if the prince dies in battle.

He has not relished worldly pleasures.’

Kutma, the queen mother, spoke to her daughter-in-law.

She spoke to her daughter-in-law.

‘Listen to what I say.’

‘On the eve of the full moon, O daughter-in-law.

On the eve of the full moon,

Go to your brother’s place.’

‘This is not a time to delay, O daughter-in-law.

This is not a time to delay.

Go to Vaikunthpuri on the eve of the full moon.’

‘Tell Avtar to send word to Verath Nagri.

Tell Avtar to send word to Verath Nagri.

Tell him to send for Antra.’





‘Inform Kasma Avtar that his nephew has taken the challenge.
Inform Kasma Avtar that his nephew has taken the challenge.
He is going to lead the war of Bharath.’

‘If he dies without tasting worldly pleasures,
If he dies without tasting worldly pleasures,
We shall all be condemned to hell.’

‘He should be with his spouse for a night.
He should be with his spouse for a night.
Antra should be called before the war begins.’

Kutma and Dhofa asked Hodra to act fast.
They asked Hodra to act fast.
They told her to go to Kasma Avtar.

Jeevta! Bhalai!

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Hodra wept and wailed. She went to Kutma’s palace. ‘How can you sleep in such a time of crisis?’ said she, ‘Balo has picked the biro of Bharath. Ill has been done in the world.’ *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Kutma said to her daughter-in-law, ‘Listen to what I say. There is no time to delay. Go to Vaikunthpuri and inform Kasma Avtar that his nephew has taken the challenge. He has picked the biro of the war. If he dies in battle we shall all be condemned to hell. Kasma Avtar should send word to Verath Nagri. Antra should be sent for from her father’s home. Verath Nagri is very far from here. Six months will pass by before she arrives. Six months is too long a time. If she does not reach here before the Sun rises, Balo will die.’ *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Kutma advised Hodra to seek Kasma Avtar’s help. Hodra set off for Vaikunthpuri. She walked with long strides





and short steps. 'If Antra does not get here before the Sun dawns, Balo will die,' reflected she. For the sake of her son she walked without respite. She arrived at Kasna Avtar's palace and said, 'Your brother-in-law has gone to the netherworld and your nephew has taken up the challenge of Bharath. He is yet to enjoy worldly pleasures. If he dies without the taste of life we shall all be condemned to hell. Ill has been done in the world. His consort is in Verath Nagri, far away. How she can be brought here before the Sun rises?' (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Kasna Avtar said to his sister, 'Listen to what I say. Do not get upset or agitated. I'll cast my spell over the world. Night will be prolonged for six months. Meanwhile, we'll arrange to bring Antra here.'

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Kasna Avtar cast his spell. The night was prolonged for six months. Hodra returned to Asanapari. 'What did Kasna Avtar say? Will he arrange to fetch Antra?' asked Kutma. 'Kasna Avtar has promised to prolong the night for six months. But this is no time to delay. We need to act fast.' Kutma called Bhemo to her palace. Walking with long strides and short steps, Bhemo arrived at the cloud-capped palace. He bowed down humbly to his mother. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! 'Did you send for me, mother?' asked Bhemo. 'Son, ill has been done in the world. If Balo dies in the war a heinous sin will have been committed. He is ignorant of worldly pleasures. Go to the quarters of the Rabaris and summon Rayko, Rupo, Ratno, Kano and Kazo, their chieftans. There is no time for delay,' said the queen mother. Taking a long staff, Bhemo started for the quarter of the Rabaris. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The Rabaris were celebrating a wedding. They had assembled at a crossroad. Opium drinks were served generously. The hookahs were filled with the best hemp. The quarter of the Rabaris was bustling with activity. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The Rabaris were busy in their quarter. Tales





of bravery were being told. Opium drinks were served generously. The hookahs were filled with the best hemp. Walking hurriedly, Bhemo arrived at the crossroad. The mother of Rayko, the chief of the Rabaris, spotted Bhemo at a distance. She pondered for a while. 'Usually, the guards of the Pandavs come to summon my sons. But today a Pandav prince has taken the trouble. Something must have gone wrong. A son of mine must have committed some crime.'

Rayko's mother spoke to her sons.
She spoke to her sons,
'Listen to what I say.'

'Usually, the guards come to summon you, O sons.
Usually, the guards come to summon you.
The king sends his guards to call you.'

'Today, I see the master coming this way, O sons.
Today, I see the master coming this way.
Bhemo is coming to summon you.'

'You must have stolen mangoes from their mango grove.
You must have stolen mangoes from their mango grove.
Bhemo himself is coming to our quarters.'

'We haven't stolen their mangoes, O mother.
We haven't stolen their mangoes.
Nor have we trespassed their pastures.'

'We have not pilfered from their fields or farms, O mother.
We have not pilfered from their fields or farms.
We haven't committed any crime.'

Bhemo arrived at the crossroads.





He arrived at the crossroads.

‘There is no time for delay, O Rayko,’ said he.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Rayko’s mother said to her sons, ‘You must have offended the law. The prince is coming to summon you. You’ll be punished severely for your crime. They’ll make you pay through your nose. They’ll make you toil hard.’ Rupo and Ratno said to their mother, ‘We have not committed any crime. We have not trespassed their fields and farms. We graze our camels at the outskirts. We wonder why Bhemo wishes to come here?’ Bhemo arrived at the crossroad. ‘There is no time to delay, O Rayko. My mother summons you.’ *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! The Rabaris followed their master’s order. Casting their pachhedis over their shoulders, they set out for the royal court. With Bhemo leading the way, they arrived at the court. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Meekly, they bowed to the queen mother and said, ‘O queen mother, we have not committed any crime. We have not intruded your pastures. We have not pilfered from your fields and farms. Why have you summoned us at this hour?’ The queen mother spoke to the chiefs and they listened intently. *Khama!* May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

Kutma, the queen mother spoke to the Rabaris.

She spoke to the Rabaris.

‘Listen to what I say.’

‘I want to tell you something close to my heart.

I want to tell you something close to my heart.

Give me an honest and straight answer.’

‘How many camels do you have, O Rabaris?

How many camels do you have?





Tell me the number of camels you possess.'

'A hundred and twenty-five camels we have, O mother.

A hundred and twenty-five camels we have.

Our herd consists of a hundred and twenty-five camels.'

'How many among them are endowed with swift speed,

O Rabaris?

How many among them are endowed with swift speed?

Tell me how many of your camels can travel faster
than the wind?

'Half the camels are endowed with speed, O mother.

Half the camels are endowed with speed.

Half of them can run with great speed.'

'I hope you're telling me the truth, O Rabaris.

I hope you're telling me the truth.

I bank upon you for an important errand.'

'Vali and Vijli can move even faster than the wind, O mother.

Vali and Vijli can move faster than wind.

They are conferred swift speed.'

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Kutma asked the Rabaris, 'How many of your camels can move swiftly?' 'Some of our camels are not suitable for speed but around fifty camels can move really fast,' said the Rabaris. 'How many of those fifty can compete with the wind? Be honest and sincere with your answer,' said the queen mother. 'You can rely on twenty-five of them,' replied the Rabaris. 'Think again and give me an exact number,' said the queen mother. Rupo and Ratno pondered for a while and said, 'O mother, Vali and Vijli can move even faster than





the wind. They can cover a distance of fifty-six miles an hour. But may we know why you are asking these questions? For which difficult errand do you need our animals?’

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! ‘Our Vali and Vijli are endowed with swift speed. They can compete with the wind,’ said the Rabaris. Kutma said, ‘Name your price and spell out the items you need for your journey. There is no time to delay. You need to start right away and return before the day dawns. Go to Verath Nagri and fetch Antra, the bride of Balo, at the earliest. Make haste and move fast.’ Ratno pondered for a while, ‘I have wedded a pretty bride today but off I go on an errand! It’s all written in our fate.’ *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! The Rabaris conversed among themselves, ‘We are celebrating Ratno’s wedding but a master’s words are abiding. We must obey and honour them.’ Kutma said, ‘The child prince has picked up the challenge of Bharath. He has not relished worldly pleasures. If he dies in the war a heinous sin will be committed. We are running out of time. Fetch Antra before dawn. Take whatever food you need. But neither pause to rest nor waste time in chatting and gossiping.’ Kutma turned to Bhemo and said, ‘O mighty Pandav, make haste. Go to a grocer and buy provisions for six months. The Rabaris are going to a far off land.’ (*Tambur*) O maharaj! The Rabaris returned to their quarters with hasty steps. They obtained silk nose strings. They harnessed their swiftest camels. The camels spoke to their masters, ‘What is the matter? We returned from a journey only a short while ago. Why do you thrust nose-strings again? We have not rested sufficiently.’ *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! A young camel said to Ratno, ‘We have returned from your wedding only a short while ago. On what important errand do you now want us to go?’ Ratno replied, ‘O my swift camel, we need to go to Verath Nagri. We have to travel the distance within the same night.’ Rupo asked the camel, ‘How will you carry us to Verath





Nagri? Do you know which way to go?’ The camel replied, ‘When I was in my mother’s belly, you had watered your herd at Kadam lake near Verath Nagri. Since then I remember the way. My mother is worn out now but I’m young and healthy. I aspire to race against the heavenly wind. I’ll do it in no time.’ His words delighted the Rabaris. They encircled the feet of the camels with small jingling bells. They tied small bells with silk strings around their camels’ necks. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Ratno adorned their camels and said to his bride, ‘I am off on a long journey. I’ll be back after six months. Eat, drink and be merry. Don’t grieve for me.’ The Rabaris mounted their swift camels and returned to the royal court. Bhemo, the mighty Pandav was waiting. *Khama!*

Bhemo spoke to the Rabaris.

He spoke to the Rabaris.

‘Listen to what I say.’

‘Take along a large square piece of cloth, O Rabaris.’

Take along a large piece square of cloth.

There is no time to delay.’

Bhemo started for the marketplace.

He started for the marketplace.

The Rabaris followed him.

Bhemo spoke to the sweet vendors.

He spoke to the sweet vendors.

‘Listen to what I say.’

‘I’ll pay you a high price, O vendors of sweets.

I’ll pay you a high price.





'Take out the items I name.'

'Give us platters full of *motichur laddus*.

Give us platters full of *motichur laddus*.

We need mounds of *mohanthal*.'

Bhemo asked for numerous kinds of sweets.

He asked for numerous kinds of sweets.

He ordered the grocers to provide varieties of sweets.

The sweet vendors were elated.

They were elated.

'The master will pay us handsomely.'

Bhemo consumed half the sweets.

He consumed half the sweets.

The remaining sweets were given to the Rabaris.

Without paying the first vendor,

Without paying the first vendor,

Bhemo moved to the next.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Bhemo said to the Rabaris, 'Follow me to the marketplace. Take along a large square piece of cloth. We'll buy some eatables for your journey. The Rabaris took their black quilts and followed the Pandav. *Khama!* Bhemo led them to the quarter of the sweet vendors. He stood at the crossroads and called out, 'Listen to what I say, O vendors of sweet! There is no time to delay. Bring out the sweets I name. I'll purchase your entire stock of sweets for a very good price.' The sweet vendors pondered for a while. 'The Lord and Master of the city has come to us. He'll pay us a fitting price.' They fetched numerous sweets. They brought out mounds of *mohanthal* and *motichur laddus*.





They piled up varieties of sweets in the street. Before the Rabaris could tie the sweets in their quilt, Bhemo stepped forward. He grabbed a plateful of each variety and gorged on them. Bhemo moved from one vendor to the next. He ate several platters of sweets. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The sweet vendors pondered for a while, 'Bhemo has consumed half our sweets. Half he has given to the Rabaris. But he moves away without paying anyone. He is our Master and Lord. How can we ask him to pay? He may feel offended.'

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Bhemo, along with the Rabaris, returned to the royal court. Once again, Kutma reminded them, 'There is no time for delay. Neither pause to rest nor waste time in chatting and gossiping.' The Rabaris assured her, 'You need not worry, O Queen Mother. We'll travel faster than the wind. We'll leave right away and shall be back before the day dawns.' With one clear jerk they mounted their camels and started off. *Khama!*

The court of the Pandavs was in a flurry.
The court of the Pandavs was in a flurry.
The Rabaris prepared to set out on a journey.

With a clear jerk the Rabaris mounted their camels.
With a clear jerk the Rabaris mounted their camels.
Bidding farewell to their masters they set out for

Verath Nagri.

The camels were endowed with speed.
They were endowed with speed.
They took off with great speed.

The riders loosened the silk nose-strings.
They loosened the silk nose-strings.
The camels rode over the heavenly wind.





Soaring high on the wings of the wind,
Soaring high on the wings of the wind,
They traversed across the city of Bhomnagar.

The outskirts of Bhomnagar was bustling.
The outskirts of Bhomnagar was bustling.
The Rabaris of Bhomnagar had assembled in
large numbers.

Feats of bravery were being related.
Feats of bravery were being related.
They pulled on their hookahs filled with the best hemp.

They felt the gust of wind on their face.
They felt the gust of wind over their face.
Gazing upwards they spotted the Pandav camels.

The Rabaris of Bhomnagar said to one another,
They said to one another,
'The camels of Asanapari are passing by.'

'Cast a long snare to bring them down,' said they.
'Cast a long snare to bring them down.
Find out why they are travelling so fast.'

The Rabaris flung their rope nooses high.
They flung their rope nooses high.
Ensnared, the camels moved down.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

The Rabaris of Asanapari mounted their camels in a single clear jerk. They loosened the silken nose-strings and the camels rode over the heavenly wind. They journeyed towards Verath Nagri. *(Tambur)*





O *maharaj*! Flying at the speed of wind, they arrived at the outskirts of Bhomnagar. The Rabaris of Bhomnagar had gathered at the outskirts. They were engrossed in a serious discussion. They were smoking their hookahs filled with the best hemp. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The Rabaris had gathered at the outskirts. They were narrating feats of bravery. Opium drinks were being served generously. The hookahs were filled with the best hemp. Suddenly, they felt a gust of wind. They pondered for a while, 'Who is travelling at the speed of wind?' They narrowed their eyes to see. They spotted the camels of Asanapari. 'These seem to be the camels of Ratno and Rupo. Get them down. Cast nooses to stop them,' said a Rabari. The Rabaris of Bhomnagar flung high their nooses. The camels of Asanapari got entangled and fell to the ground. The Rabaris greeted Ratno and Rupo. They embraced one another warmly. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The Rabaris of Bhomnagar said, 'You seem to be in great hurry. What is so important that you are travelling at the speed of the wind? Rest here for a while and resume your journey.' They heated water for their guests. They helped them with their bath. Ratno and Rupo adorned themselves suitably and came to the assembly of the Rabaris. They talked about their tidings and smoked hookahs filled with best hemp. *Khama!*

Warmly, the Rabaris greeted one another.

Warmly, they greeted one another.

They talked about their tidings.

Opium drinks were served.

Opium drinks were served.

They served opium drinks generously.

'What destination are you heading for, O brothers?

'What destination are you heading for?





Why do you travel in such haste?’ asked the Rabaris.

Rupo and Ratno spoke to their hosts.

They spoke to their hosts.

‘We are heading for Verath Nagri.’

‘We are going to fetch Antra, the princess.

We are going to fetch Antra, the princess.

We’ll take her to her groom’s palace.’

‘Balo has taken on the challenge of Bharath.

He has taken on the challenge of Bharath.

He has picked up the biro of Daljhojhan.’

‘We need to reach home before the dawn.

We need to reach home before the dawn.

We have to accomplish the errand in a single night.’

Rupo and Ratno prepared to leave.

They prepared to leave.

They were ready to resume their journey.

They thought of taking leave of Joyto, the Rabari chief.

They thought of taking leave of Joyto, the Rabari chief.

They looked for the chief of Bhomnagar.

But Joyto was not around.

But he was not around.

Ratno and Rayko looked for him.

They went to Joyto’s house.

They went to Joyto’s house.

They talked to the chief’s wife.⁵⁵





They mounted their camels with a clear jerk.
They mounted their camels with a clear jerk.
They loosened the silk strings.

The camels soared on the heavenly wind.
They soared on the heavenly wind.
They rode towards Verath Nagri.

Hurriedly, they tore up the path.
Hurriedly, they tore up the path.
Riding upon the wind they travelled on.

On their way they came upon Night.
On their way they came upon Night.
They stopped her and asked.

‘Who are you to travel at this unearthly hour?
Who are you to travel at this unearthly hour?
Where are you going in such haste?’

‘I am the Night incarnate,’ said she.
‘I am the Night incarnate.
I can’t stop as I have to leave before twilight.’

Ratno dropped his stick on the ground.
He dropped his stick on the ground.
And he spoke to the waning night.

‘Before you fade into twilight, O Night,
Before you fade into twilight,
Do me a favour of handing me my stick.’

Night picked the stick from the ground.





Night picked the stick from the ground.
She raised her hand to give it to Ratno.

Ratno hauled Night onto his camel.
He hauled Night onto his camel.
He bound her in his sack.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

The Rabaris of Bhomnagar invited Ratno and Rupo for a round of opium. Joyto, their host, left the place to collect his wages. Rupo and Ratno waited for him. They were getting delayed. They went to Joyto's home to take his leave. Joyti, the chief's wife, had kept him confined to the house. Rupo and Ratno were getting impatient to depart. They requested Joyti to let them speak to her husband. Bidding him farewell, they departed.

(Tambur) O maharaj! The Rabaris travelled with the speed of lightning. Traversing across strange lands they moved towards Verath Nagri. They spotted someone coming their way. Ratno spoke to the stranger, 'Who is travelling at this unearthly hour?' 'I'm Night incarnate, O brothers,' he got a reply, 'I am slightly late, I should fade before twilight. The Sun will come out in a short while.' Ratno pondered for a while. 'If the night fades into day, ill will be done in the world. We won't be able to make it to Asanapari with Antra. Balo will die if the day dawns before we reach Asanapari. I should deceive Night and delay the rise of dawn.' He dropped his stick to the ground and said to Night, 'If you are getting late, you should make haste. But please do me a favour. I have dropped my stick by mistake. Would you hand it to me before fading away?' *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Night picked the stick and stretched her hand out to Ratno, the Rabari. Ratno hauled her onto his camel, along with the stick, and bundled her into his sack. Hurriedly, they tore





up the path to Verath Nagri. (*Tambur*) May you be well, O *honkaria*.
Life is short but the tale never ends.

Antra was asleep in her palace of clouds.
She was asleep in the palace of clouds.
In her palace she was fast asleep.

Slumber sealed her eyes.
Slumber sealed her eyes.
Soon she succumbed to sleep.

Antra woke up to a dream.
She woke up to a dream.
She dreamt a dream in the middle of the night.

Balo appeared in her dream.
Balo appeared in her dream.
Antra saw her spouse in the dream.

The dream spoke to Antra.
The dream spoke to Antra.
'Listen to what I say.'

'How can you sleep at this hour, O Antra?
How can you sleep at this hour?
Ill has befallen the world.'

'Your consort has taken up a challenge.
Your consort has taken up a challenge.
He has picked up the biro of Bharath.'

'The Kauravs and the Pandavs, O Antra,
The Kauravs and the Pandavs,
As the day dawns they'll wage war.'





'Your spouse will die in the battle.
He'll die in the battle.
He'll be the martyr of Bharath.'

Bhalai! Jeevta!

Man and wife will be separated, O Antra.
Man and wife will be separated.
They will not meet again.'

The dream spoke of future adversity.
The dream spoke of future adversity.
It revealed impending disaster to Antra.

A startled Antra sprang to her feet.
A startled Antra sprang to her feet.
'Ill has been done in the world,' thought she.

Antra spoke to her mother.
She spoke to her mother.
'Listen to what I say.'

'Ill has been done in the world, O mother.
Ill has been done in the world.
My consort has picked the biro of Bharath.'

'The Pandavs have sent for me.
They have sent for me.
The Rabaris are coming to fetch me.'

'Rupo and Ratno are on their way.
Rupo and Ratno are on their way.
They are coming to take me to Asanapari.'





'Your son-in-law has taken up the challenge, O mother.
He has taken up the challenge.
The Pandavs and the Kauravs will be locked in battle.'

Antra's mother spoke to her.
Antra's mother spoke to her.
'Listen to what I say.'

'Don't pay heed to what the dream says, O daughter.
Don't pay heed to what the dream says.
Such dreams should be ignored.'

'Long live my daughter and son-in-law.
Long live my daughter and son-in-law.
My daughter will have a long conjugal life.'

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Antra was in deep slumber. She felt a gust of wind sweeping across her face. Antra was asleep on a high couch. A mattress of silk lay on her couch. Flowers were scattered on her mattress. Amidst the whiffs of sweet fragrance she drifted into slumber. *(Tambur) O maharaj!*

Antra dreamed a dream. She saw her spouse in her dream. The dream spoke to her, 'How can you sleep when Bharath is impending? Ill will be done in the world. The pair of man and wife will be separated forever. Your spouse has picked the biro of Bharath. The Kauravs and Pandavs will wage war against each other. Your consort will be a martyr in the war.' The dream forebode future adversity. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! The dream spoke to Antra, 'Your mother-in-law has sent for you. Rupo and Ratno Rabaris are coming to fetch you. Riding on swift camels, they'll arrive in Verath Nagri.' A startled Antra sprang to her feet. She woke up her mother and said, 'Are you





awake or asleep, O mother? If you are up and awake, listen to what I say. Ill has been done in the world. I had a nightmare.' 'Why did you awaken me, O daughter? What did you see in your dream?' Antra replied, 'O mother, your son-in-law appeared in my dream. Then the dream spoke to me. It spoke of future adversity. My spouse has picked the biro of Bharath. The Kauravs and Pandavs will go to war. Balo will be a martyr in the war.' 'Don't pay any heed to such a ghastly dream. Such dreams never come true. The dream should be condemned. Shift your couch to the other side of the room and try to sleep again,' said her mother. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* 'Glory be to the throne of Asanapari,' said the mother, 'May my daughter and her spouse enjoy conjugal life for many years. May my son-in-law live long! O daughter, why did you have such an ominous dream? A son-in-law comes to one's aid in the time of adversity. O daughter, shift your couch to the other side of the room. Banish all such dreams from your eyes.'

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Antra shifted her couch to the other side of her chamber and drifted into sleep. The Rabaris arrived at the outskirts of Verath Nagri. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

Antra wept and wailed.

She wept and wailed.

'O mother, ill has been done in the world.'

The Rabaris arrived at the outskirts.

They arrived at the outskirts.

They arrived outside Verath Nagri.

The Rabaris knocked at the gates of Verath Nagri.

They knocked at the gates of Verath Nagri.

They called out to the gatekeeper.





‘Open the gates and let us in, O gatekeeper.
Open the gates and let us in.
There is no time for delay.’

The guard at the gate spoke to them.
The guard at the gate spoke to them.
‘Listen to what I say.’

‘We don’t let in strangers at this hour.
We don’t let in strangers at this hour.
None can come in at this unearthly hour.’

‘The keys of the locks are with the king.
The keys of the locks are with the king.
I can’t wake him in the middle of the night.’

‘The gate will be opened at the specified time.
The gate will be opened at the specified time.
Spend the night at the dunghill, O strangers.’

Jeevta! Bhalai!

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Antra was upset and agitated. A dream spoke to her about future adversity. She could not sleep again. She wept and wailed. Tears coursed down her cheeks. The dream told her about the impending war. It said that Rupo and Ratno would come to fetch her. The princess could not sleep again. She kept tossing and turning in bed. ‘Ill has been done in the world. What should I do? Should I end my life by jumping off the terrace?’ thought she. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Antra woke her mother. She told her mother about her dream. ‘May my son-in-law enjoy a long blissful life!





May you live together for many years to come,' said her mother. She advised her daughter to move her couch to the other side of her chamber. But Antra could not sleep again. She sat lamenting in her cloud-capped palace. (*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* The camel riders arrived outside Verath Nagri. They knocked at the gates of the city. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* Rupo and Ratno spoke to the guard at the gates, 'Open the gates, O gatekeeper. There is no time for delay. We have come with a message for your king.' The gatekeeper said, 'Who has arrived at this hour of the night? I'm not going to oblige any strangers. The keys of the padlocks are with the king. I won't wake him for the sake of strangers.' 'We have come to take Antra to her husband's place. Make haste and open the gates,' said the pair of Rabaris. 'No way! The gates remain closed at this unearthly hour. Go and rest at the dunghill till the morning Sun rises,' said the guard. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* 'Spread some dry dung and leaves and spend the night at the dunghill,' said the keeper of the gate. The camels heard him say these words. They felt offended. They spoke to their keepers, 'Listen to what we say. We are not used to spending the night on dunghills. We are camels of a royal family. We are peerless in strength and speed. Loosen the string for a while and we'll show the gatekeeper our worth. Trot around for some time and we'll take you inside the gates.' *Khama!*

The camels spoke to their keepers,
They spoke to their keepers,
'Listen to what we say.'

'Don't pay any heed to the gatekeeper.
Don't pay any heed to the gatekeeper.
Mount on us again.'

'Loosen the silken strings a bit.





Loosen the silken strings a bit.
And we'll take you to the other side of the gate.'

The Rabaris mounted their camels.
They mounted their camels.
They loosened the silk strings a bit.

They trotted on their camels for some time.
They trotted on their camels for some time.
They trotted around for a while.

The camels rent the air.
They rent the air.
They jumped over the city gates.

The camels landed in Manek Chawk.
They landed in Manek Chawk.
Bringing their riders past the gate.

Manek Chawk was busy with activity.
It was bustling with life.
Rubbing off their sleep, people gathered around.

Antra beat her breast.
She beat her breast.
'Look, O mother, the riders have arrived.'

Hurriedly, Antra descended the cloud-capped palace.
Hurriedly, she descended the cloud-capped palace.
She raced down towards Manek Chawk.

Antra greeted the Rabaris.
She greeted the Rabaris.
She met them at Manek Chawk.





'Why have you come to Verath Nagri?
Why have you come to Verath Nagri?
Who has sent you here?' asked the princess.

'Why have you come at this hour of the night?
Why have you come at this hour of the night?
What's so urgent that you have arrived at this hour?'

'We've come to take you to Asanapari, O princess.
We have come to take you to Asanapari.
There is no time to waste.'

Antra wept and wailed.

She wept and wailed.

'Ill has been done in the world,' said she.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

The Rabaris mounted their camels again. They loosened the silk strings. They cantered on the camels for a while. The camels trotted around in a circle for some time. They then rent the air and jumped over the gates of Verath Nagri. They landed in Manek Chawk. The people of Verath Nagri heard the noise. Rubbing off the sleep from their eyes, they thronged the streets. Antra heard the sound. She became alert. She beat her breast and said to her mother, 'I had told you that the Rabaris were on their way. See, they have arrived to fetch me.' She descended the cloud-capped palace with hasty steps. She raced towards Manek Chawk. She greeted the Rabaris and asked, 'Why have you come at his hour?'

(Tambur) O maharaj! Ratno and Rupo said, 'O princess, there is no time for delay. Your spouse has taken the challenge. He has picked the biro for Bharath. Ill has been done in the world. We have come to fetch you. We need to reach Asanapari before dawn.' Antra wept





and wailed. She said to her mother, 'Wake up my father. Tell him to come here immediately.' The queen sent word to Viyor Velaro, the king. A startled king sprang to his feet. He summoned his chieftains to court. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Viyor Velaro asked the Rabaris the purpose of their visit. They said, 'There is no time for delay, O king. We need to reach Asanapari before sunrise. Bestow wedding gifts on your daughter and we'll depart before the Sun rises.' The queen went to the marketplace and woke up the Bania. 'O Bania, my brother, are you awake or asleep? Come out if you are already up, get up if you are still asleep,' said the queen, 'It's time to send our princess to her husband's place. We need to buy some clothes as her wedding gift.' The Bania sprang on his feet and came out. *Khama!*

The Bania brought out pieces of cloth.

He brought out pieces of cloth.

He showed the queen a few cloths of silk.

The Bania gave the queen, saris bordered with gold lace.

He gave the queen, saris bordered with gold lace.

The queen spotted a black sari among them.

'O that's inauspicious,' cried the queen.

'That's inauspicious.

You have brought ill luck to my daughter,' she cursed.

'May you be condemned to hell, O Bania,' said she.

'May you be condemned to hell.

May you rot in hell.'

The queen shoved aside the pile of clothes.

She shoved aside the pile of clothes.

She went to the next shop.





‘Show me some silk clothes, O brother,’ said she.

‘Show me some silk clothes.

There is no time for delay.’

The merchant brought out heaps of clothes.

He brought out heaps of clothes.

He placed them at the queen’s feet.

The queen spotted a black cloth.

She spotted a black cloth.

‘O, this is inauspicious,’ cried she.

The queen cursed the merchant for his carelessness.

She cursed the merchant for his carelessness.

She swore abuse at him.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

‘Show me some silk clothes, O brother,’ said the queen to the cloth merchant. The merchant brought out heaps of clothes. He piled them at the queen’s feet. The queen noticed a black cloth. She bellowed at the merchant, ‘May you be condemned to hell! You have brought ill luck to my daughter.’ *Khama!* The queen moved to another vendor. She asked him to show her some clothes. The Bania brought out the best clothes for the princess. The queen spotted a couple of black saris among the collection. An infuriated queen shouted at the Bania, ‘This is inauspicious. Why do you show us black saris? May you be condemned to hell.’ The Bania was beaten black and blue. *Khama!* Antra said to her mother, ‘It is all written in my destiny. Why do you get the Bania thrashed? Fortune has been false to me.’ May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.





Antra spoke to her mother.

She spoke to her mother.

‘Listen to what I say.’

‘Don’t get people thrashed for my sake, O mother.

Don’t get people thrashed for my sake.

Why do you get them beaten?’

‘It’s all written in our fate, O mother.

It’s all written in our fate.

Fortune does not favour me.’

Antra wept and wailed.

She wept and wailed.

She shed tears of blood.

The queen selected her clothes with care.

She selected her clothes with care.

She chose each garment herself.

They returned to the palace of clouds.

They returned to the palace of clouds.

Hastily, they came back.

The queen collected the wedding gifts.

She collected the wedding gifts.

She brought out various gifts for Antra.

Rupo and Ratno spoke to the queen.

They spoke to the queen.

‘There is no time for delay.’

‘Make haste or we’ll be delayed,’ said they.

‘Make haste or we’ll be delayed.’





O queen, we beg your leave.'

(*Tambur*) O maharaj!

The queen chose Antra's clothes with much care and fuss. She prepared to send her daughter to her husband's home. *Khama!* The queen collected numerous items as parting gifts for Antra. Rupo and Ratno said, 'O queen, the kingdom of the Pandavs is far from here. If we are late, ill will be done in the world.' The Rabari brothers groomed their camels. The queen gathered the wedding gifts and prepared to bid farewell to her daughter. *Khama!* May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

Antra spoke to her mother.

She spoke to her mother.

'Listen to what I say.'

'Give me a jar filled with nectar, O mother.

Give me a jar filled with nectar.

Give me a twig of kaniyor.'

(An accompanist: She asked for nectar. The lead singer: *Khama!*)

Antra asked for a jar full of nectar.

She asked for a jar full of nectar.

She asked for nectar as a parting gift.

Antra placed the jar at the window sill.

She placed the jar at the window sill.

At the window she placed the jar of nectar.

But at the time of leaving for Asanapari,

At the time of leaving for Asanapari,

She forgot to take the nectar with her.





Antra descended from the palace of clouds.
She descended from the palace of clouds.
Hurriedly, she ran down the flight of stairs.

Antra went to Manek Chawk.
She went to Manek Chawk.
Hurriedly, she went to Manek Chawk.

The Rabaris were waiting for her.
They were waiting for her.
Antra arrived at Manek Chawk.

Antra mounted the camel.
She mounted the camel.
She mounted the swift camel of Asanapari.

The Rabaris loosened the silk string.
They loosened the silk string,
They urged the camels to take off.

(An accompanist: It's time to leave. The lead singer: *Khama!*)

The Rabaris cracked their whips.
They cracked their whips.
The camels took off with great speed.

The Rabaris loosened the nose-strings.
They loosened the nose-strings.
The camels set off for Asanapari.

The camels jumped over the closed gates.
They jumped over the closed gates.
They rent the air.

Bhalai! Khama! Jeevta!





(*Tambur*) *O maharaj!*

The queen put aside the wedding gifts for Antra. She brought silk clothes. She fetched ornaments of gold. For her daughter she tied numerous gifts in a bundle. Antra said to her mother, 'Give me a jar of nectar and a twig of the kaniyor tree. If your son-in-law becomes a martyr in this war, I'll sprinkle nectar over his lifeless body and bring him back to life. The pair of us, husband and wife, will never be separated.' The queen gave her a jar full of nectar. Antra placed it on the sill of the arched window. She brought in the twig of kaniyor and put it beside the jar. *Khama!* But in the rush of the moment she forgot to take the jar with her.

(*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* The Rabaris were getting impatient. 'Asanapari is very far from here,' said they. Antra hastily descended the stairs of the cloud-capped palace. She forgot to take the jar of nectar with her. They arrived at Manek Chawk. They mounted their camels. The queen raced down the palace stairs to bid farewell to her beloved daughter. The princess waved at her parents and said, 'O, my parents, please don't grieve for me. Eat, drink and prosper.' She said to the people of Verath Nagri, 'I wish you all prosperity. I'm leaving for Asanapari. I bid you farewell.' *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* Antra said to her mates, 'We have wandered around together in the streets and alleyways of Verath Nagri. If things go well I'll come back to see you again. And if I don't survive the war I bid you farewell forever.' She turned towards the palace and said, 'I wish you to continue to stand upright, O palace of clouds. May my hindola remain in good condition forever! May the glistening green garden remain in bloom forever! The trees of champa and kevra, under which I have enjoyed cool breeze, should remain evergreen.' With these parting words Antra mounted the camel. The Rabaris loosened the strings and cracked their whips. The camels took off for Asanapari. They rent the air and jumped





over the gates of Verath Nagri. The camels of Asanapari started running with the speed of wind. Clouds of dust arose as they tore along.

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Antra had a hunch that she had forgotten the jar of nectar. She groped in the bundles. She felt all the bags and boxes. She bit her brow. 'I'm defeated,' said she, 'I have a cursed fate, alas! I thought that I'd animate life in my husband's body if he becomes a martyr.' Streams of tears poured from her eyes. 'O Rupo and Ratno, riders of the camels, stop your winged camels. I have forgotten to take my jar.' The Rabaris asked the camels to slow down. *Khama! Khama!* May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

Antra spoke to the Rabaris.

She spoke to the Rabaris.

'Listen to what I say.'

'Slow down your winged animals, O Rabaris.

Slow down your winged animals.

I have remembered something important.'

'Ill has been done in the world, O Rabaris.

Ill has been done in the world.

I've erred on this side of the world.'

'I've forgotten the jar of nectar, O Rupo Rabari.

I've forgotten the jar of nectar.

The jar of nectar is left behind.'

'Turn back your camel, O Rupo.

Turn back your camel.

Bring the jar for me.'





‘There is no time for delay, O Rupo.
There is no time for delay.
Make haste and go back to Verath Nagri.’

Rupo spoke to Antra, the princess.
He spoke to Antra, the princess.
‘Listen to what I say.’

‘Halt here and wait for me, O princess.
Halt here and wait for me.
Rest here till I come back.’

‘I’ll go back and bring the pot of nectar.
I’ll go back and bring the pot of nectar.
‘I’ll bring the potful of nectar from your palace.’

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Rupo and Ratno, the Rabari brothers, mounted their camels with the princess of Verath Nagri. They took the way to Asanapari. They arrived at the outskirts of Bhomnagar. Ratno released Night from his sack and said, ‘You were on the verge of fading away. We had to accomplish an important errand. We were in a hurry to carry out our task. But now we have finished our work. You may fade into twilight. We are no longer running against time. We have covered half the distance. We are about to reach our destination. Before day dawns, we’ll be at Asanapari.’ *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Rupo and Ratno released Night. They were sure to reach their destination before sunrise. Antra had a hunch that she had forgotten something important. She felt all the boxes and bundles. She could not find the jar. Upset and agitated, she spoke to the Rabari brothers, ‘I have erred on this side of the world. I’ve forgotten the jar of nectar. I can’t save my spouse now. The pair of





us will be separated. Stop your camels and go back to Verath Nagri. Bring the jar from my palace.' Antra wept and wailed. Streams of tears coursed down her cheeks. *Khama!* (*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* Rupo said to the princess, 'Don't you worry a bit. I'll go back to your palace and bring the jar. Meanwhile, please rest here and wait for me. But where will I find it? What should I tell your mother?' 'Try to remember the words 'jar of nectar' and 'twig of kaniyor'. Tell my mother to give you the twig and the jar.' said Antra. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* Rupo turned around his winged camel. He travelled back to Verath Nagri. Hurriedly, he tore up the way. Every now and then he repeated the words 'jar of nectar' and 'twig of kaniyor'. Soon he was at the outskirts of Verath Nagri. He arrived at the marketplace. He rode past the streets and alleyways of Verath Nagri. He kept repeating the names of the two items. But God had planned otherwise. He wanted things to go according to his design. Something else was in store for Antra. Rupo halted his camel at the foot of the stairs going to the palace of clouds. He dismounted from the camel and started climbing. Repeating the words 'the jar of nectar' and 'the twig of kaniyor', he ascended the steps of the palace of clouds. He stumbled in his haste. (*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* Rupo fumbled while going up the steps. The words he was repeating slipped from his mind. The 'jar of nectar' became a 'jar of oil' and the 'twig of kaniyor' was swapped for a 'comb'. *Khama!* Hurriedly, Rupo climbed the stairs of the palace of clouds. *Khama!* May you be well, *O honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

Rupo stumbled over a step.

He stumbled over a step.

In his haste Rupo faltered at a step.

The words he was repeating all the way,

The words he was repeating all the way,





Slipped from his mind.

Rupo arrived at the palace of the queen.

He arrived at the palace of the queen.

He told her the purpose of his visit.

'Listen to what I say, O queen.

Listen to what I say.

Give me a jar of oil and a comb,' said he.

Antra's mother came out.

She came out.

'Why have you come?' she asked.

'Why have you returned, O Rabari?

Why have you returned?

Tell me, what has brought you back?'

'I've returned for a jar of oil and a comb, O queen.

I've returned for a jar of oil and a comb.

The princess has left them behind.'

(An accompanist: She might need it someday. The lead singer:
Khama!)

The queen handed him a jar of oil.

She handed him a jar of oil.

She also gave him a comb.

Once again, Rupo turned back his camel.

Once again, he turned back his camel.

Hurriedly, he tore up the way.

Rupo rode his camel at the speed of lightning.

He rode his camel at the speed of lightning.





He loosened the silken nose-string.

Jeevta! Bhalai!

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Rupo, the Rabari, kept repeating, 'a jar of nectar' and 'a twig of kaniyor' all the way to Verath Nagri. But at the last moment he stumbled and forgot the words. He tried to recollect the words in vain. Two different words flashed in his mind's eye. Instead of a 'jar of nectar', he remembered a 'jar of oil'. Instead of the 'twig' he asked for a comb. He stood before the palace of the clouds. 'O queen, please come out quickly,' he shouted. 'Make haste, O queen,' said he, 'There is no time for delay. Your daughter has forgotten two things. She has asked for a jar of oil and a comb.' *Khama!* The queen heard Rupo shout her name. Startled, she sprang from her bed. Hurriedly, she came out and said, 'O Rupo, the Rabari, why have you come back? Tell me for which important task have you returned?' Rupo told her the reason of his visit. Naively, he asked for a comb and a jar of oil. 'Give me these, quick and fast. I can't afford to waste time,' said he. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! The queen rushed inside to fetch these items. She handed Rupo, a comb and a jar of oil. Rupo mounted his camel and loosened the silk string. The camels took wing in a flash. Hurriedly, they tore up the way. Clouds of dust rose as they rode by. Rupo reached the outskirts of Bhomnagar in no time. Ratno and Antra were waiting for him eagerly. The princess said to him, 'Did you get the desired things?' 'Yes, my princess, I brought the things you had asked for,' said the Rabari. 'What did you bring, O Ratno? Let me have a look at the bundle,' said Antra. She felt in the bundle and cried, 'O thick head, what have you brought? How could you commit such a blunder?' *Khama!*





(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Ill was done in the world. Antra beat her breast. She wept and wailed. 'O Rupo, you are a dumb fiend. You have erred on this side of the world. I had asked you to bring a jar of nectar and a twig of kaniyor, and you have come back with a jar of oil and a comb. What shall I do with these things? I will be separated from my spouse. I won't be able to bring him back to life.' Antra beat her brow. With a heavy heart she mounted the camel. They resumed their journey to Asanapari. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

Balo sat at the pat.

He sat at the pat.

The Pandavs were preparing for Bharath.

Hodra was upset and agitated.

She was upset and agitated.

She was beating her breast.

'Ill has been done in the world,' said she.

'Ill has been done in the world.

My child is going to the great war.'

(An accompanist: He is her only son. The lead singer: *Khama*!)

'O son, when shall I see your face again?' she said.

'When shall I see your face again?

The mother and her son will be separated.'

Balo spoke to his mother.

He spoke to his mother.

'Listen to what I say, O mother.'

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BHARATH

(Tambur) O maharaj !

Riding a camel, Antra was about to reach Asanapari. Hurriedly, she tore along. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* The waking cock's crow heralded the day. The first streak of light brightened the sky. Asanapari was getting ready for the war. The Tower of Victory was set up in the middle of the battlefield of Kuria Khet.⁵⁶ A roll of drums crackled like thunderous clouds. The sound of the war drum reverberated in the town. War cries rent the air. In the field of Kuria Khet, the Pandavs prepared themselves. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* The Kauravs were getting prepared for the war in Dhavlo Gadh. Asanapari was bustling with activity. Hodra was engulfed in grief. 'Ill has been done in the world. My jewel will be snatched away from me. My fate is playing false to me,' lamented she. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Hodra wept and wailed. Showering affection on her son she held his head in her hands and said, 'What should I do? I'm the most unfortunate mother. When shall we meet again? Instead of playing in my lap, he is leading an army to Bharath. My beloved son will face a hostile army.' *Khama!* 'O son, wait for a moment. Your bride has still not arrived. She must be on her way to Asanapari. I had sent Rupo and Ratno to Verath Nagri to fetch her. Just have a look at her before you leave. If you depart for war, ill will





be done in the world,' pleaded she. Balo said, 'O mother, don't become despondent. This is a time to prove one's prowess. Cowards die many times before their deaths but a valiant tastes death only once.' *Khama!*

Balo spoke to his mother.

He spoke to his mother.

'Listen to what I say.'

'Cowards die many times before their deaths, O mother.

Cowards die many times before their deaths.

But a valiant one tastes death only once.'

'This is a time to prove one's prowess in the battlefield, O mother.

This is a time to prove one's prowess in the battlefield.

The cowards will hide their faces.'

O, long live such valiant warriors.

Long live such valiant warriors.

A woman's motherhood should never be wasted.

The Pandavs equipped themselves with arms.

They equipped themselves with arms.

They sharpened the blades of their swords and spears.

A roll of the drums crackled like thunderous clouds.

They crackled like thunderous clouds.

The war drums made booming sounds.

Fierce, fiery warriors were gripped with excitement.

Fierce, fiery warriors were gripped with excitement.

Glory be to the mother who bore them.

Balo's eyes turned copper red.

His eyes turned copper red.





His deep eyes smouldered with defiance.

Balo twirled the ends of his moustache.

He twirled the ends of his moustache.

He was equipped with his weapons.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Hodra was much concerned. She begged her son to wait for a while. She wailed and lamented to her son. Balo said to her, 'Don't feel distraught for me, O mother. Only the valiant can look the enemy in the eye. Cowards stay back in the shelter of their houses. Either I'll come back victorious or I'll embrace death.' Glory be to the mother who bore such intrepid warriors. *Khama!* The trumpets were blown loudly. The sounds of conch shells filled the town. War drums were beaten with huge drum sticks. Everyone was alert and agile. Balo's body quivered with excitement. His deep eyes smouldered with defiance. They were shooting fire sparks of rage. *Khama! Khama!* It was a time to prove one's prowess. It was a time to brace oneself. The blades of swords and daggers were sharpened. Elephants and camels were kept ready. The great war of Bharat was impending. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! The Pandavs set out for war. Walking through the streets and alleyways of Asanapari, they came to the marketplace. Balo, the child prince, took the lead. They walked towards the outskirts. *Khama!* From the other side of the city the jingling sound of the bells was heard. The camels carrying Antra entered the city. Balo had just walked past the gates. Antra saw him walking beyond the bounds of Asanapari. She jingled her anklets. The jingling sound of her anklet did not deter the child warrior. He moved on. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Balo heard the jingling sound. His bride from Verath Nagri had arrived. However, he was steadfast in his pledge.





He had sworn to never halt or turn back. He could not turn around to glance at his bride's face. *Khama!*

Antra spoke to Balo.

She spoke to Balo.

'Listen to what I say.'

'I've arrived from a far off land, O prince.

I've arrived from a far off land.

I was anxious and agonized.'

'Turn back once for my sake, O prince.

Turn back once for my sake.

I long for a parting glance.'

'We are knotted in wedlock, O prince.

We are knotted in wedlock.

We are husband and wife.'

'I pine for your loving gaze, O prince.

I pine for your loving gaze.

I adore you more than anyone else in this world.'

Undeterred, he moved on.

Undeterred, he moved on.

Balo did not glance back.

Balo arrived in the field of Kuria Khet.

He arrived in the field of Kuria Khet.

He led the Pandav army to the field of Kuria Khet.

With the first streak of light,

With the first streak of light,

They are going to wage the war.





(Tambur) O maharaj!

Who'd pause for the sake of a woman when one is off on a glorious cause? Balo was a brave warrior and he had taken an oath. He had taken the lead in the great war. He was off to fight in the Bharath. *Khama!* May you be well, *O honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

(Tambur) O maharaj! The war drums reverberated in the town. The air was thick with war cries. The camels arrived at the outskirts while Balo Himmat was departing. There was an uproar in Asanapari. Antra urged Balo to pause for a while. 'I am anxious and agitated. I've arrived from a far off land. O my prince, please turn back and cast a glance at my waning face.' She clanked the small bells of her anklet to win a glance from her beloved. The clamour of anklets was lost on Balo. He was excited by the war cries. His eyes were shooting fire sparks. He arrived at the battlefield of Kuria Khet. The great war commenced. Swords and daggers reflected the rays of the Sun. Spears were hurled like heavy hail. Great commotion was created. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! On one side the Pandavs poised for the assault. On the other side seventy-eight Kaurav brothers were ready to attack. Arrows flew through the air like slashing rain. Warriors advanced like the surging sea. Clouds of dust dimmed the sky. The Kauravs and the Pandav princes fought fiercely. *Khama!* An agile Balo Himmat breached the first circle of warriors, the water maze, on the first day. On the second day, he pierced through the second formation, the golden maze. Balo broke through the maze of brass on the third day. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* The child prince broke the circular formation of troops each day. He breached five formidable mazes. He fought relentlessly. The Kaurav camp suffered devastation but the Pandavs did not undergo much loss. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Amidst the thick of the war in the field of Kuria Khet, a lapwing was chanting the name of Avtar. She was struggling





to save her small chicks. Chopped heads and trunks were falling around her nest. The lapwing beseeched Avtar, 'O Lord, please guard my young ones from this dance of death. When two mighty bulls lock horns in a fight, many a small plant and tree get trampled. This place is bustling with activity. Kindly see that my chicks do not get trampled. O Kasna Avtar, you'll be responsible for their death. I'll curse and condemn you if they die.' (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Avtar answered her prayers. A huge bell hanging from the neck of an elephant was cut loose. It fell on the nest of the lapwing. Her chicks were safely covered from the outside bustle. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The creator and the destroyer are not separate entities. The one who slays also acts as a saviour. Kasna Avtar saved the little ones of the lapwing. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Meanwhile, breaking through the sixth formation, Balo was about to enter the final maze of death. The army of the Kauravs was ruthlessly massacred. On the morning of the seventh day, Balo Himmat stood aside. The heads of the enemy scattered around. The secret of the seventh maze was unknown to Balo. Twirling the end of his bushy moustache, Bhemo held his mace high. An infuriated Bhemo forged ahead to break the seventh formation. Breathing heavily, an excited Balo watched the exploits of his uncle. Resting his head on one end of his bow he stood at a distance. Bhemo was engaged in fierce battle and Balo was engrossed watching him. Avtar became aware of the situation. He was awaiting such an opportunity. Kasna Avtar took the form of a little mouse and went close to Balo. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! While Balo was admiring his uncle's feat on the battlefield, Avtar in the form of a mouse, climbed up his bow and severed the bowstring. *Khama!* The arch of the bow sprang up forcefully. It cut through Balo's palate. The child warrior died in an instant. Ill was done in the world. On one side the seventy-eight Kaurav princes lay dead, on the other side, Balo fell on the ground. The Tower of Victory stood straight, radiating light like a lamp, amidst the battlefield. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends. *Khama!*





ARJHAN'S GRIEF

‘Don’t let even a fly touch your father’s body,’ said Hirapath to her son, ‘Watch over your father’s lifeless body. I am going to the palace of clouds. I’ll return in a flash.’ Hurriedly, she went to her palace. She came back with an urn filled with nectar and a kaniyor twig. She dipped one end of the twig into the urn and sprinkled the drops of nectar over Arjhan’s body. Life animated the corpse. Arjhan stretched and sprang to his feet. (*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* Hirapath and Nepji greeted Arjhan. They talked about everyday matters. *Khama!* Hirapath said to Arjhan, ‘O my husband, what curse follows you in the netherworld? Twice you came to my land and twice you were killed. Fortunately, on both occasions I could defeat destiny and avert your death. But tell me, why have you come to the netherworld? Open your heart and share your desire with me.’ Arjhan said to Hirapath, ‘I’ve come here to fetch the hide of the rhino of the netherworld. There is no time for delay. I am in great haste. But I have been delayed. My own son came in my way.’ *O maharaj!* Don’t sow seeds in someone else’s field. Never cultivate relationship with a stranger. Your own blood will hinder your way. Your own offspring will lock horns with you. Always be on your guard and never trust the unknown. One should always bear this in mind and never err. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* Hirapath said to her son, ‘Make haste, O son.





There is no time for delay. Kill another rhino and scrap its skin for your father. He needs to return to Asanapari immediately.' Nepji killed the leader of the herd. He scraped its skin for Arjhan. With the hide of the rhino of the netherworld, Arjhan left for Asanapari.

On an auspicious day,
On an auspicious day,
The Sun shone brightly.

Arjhan wended his way away from the netherworld.
He wended his way away from the netherworld.
Hurriedly, he travelled towards Asanapari.

He came closer to Asanapari.
He came closer to Asanapari.
He reached the outskirts of his kingdom.

Hodra wept long and bitterly.
She wept long and bitterly.
Arjhan's arrival revived her grief.

'Death has robbed us of our prince,' said she.
'Death has robbed us of our prince.
Balo Himmat has become a martyr.'

'An inauspicious shadow has descended on us,
An inauspicious shadow has descended on us,'
Hodra cried inconsolably.

Arjhan hit his head against a slab of stone.
He hit his head against a slab of stone.
Grief-stricken, he beat his brow.

'He was our only son,' cried Arjhan.





'He was our only son.
Ill has been done in the world.'

'I curse and condemn you, O Kasma Avtar,' said Arjhan.
'I curse and condemn you.
You give with one hand and snatch away with the other.'

'My young prince has become a martyr.
My young prince has become a martyr.
Ill has been done in the world.'

'Balo sent me to the netherworld.
He sent me to the netherworld.
And he became a martyr in the war.'

Arjhan took the way to the cremation ground.
He took the way to the cremation ground.
Overwhelmed with grief, he arrived at the
cremation ground.

At the cremation ground, Arjhan cried miserably.
He cried miserably.
Ill has been done in the world.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

On a very auspicious day, the narrator narrates an interesting tale. One fine day an incident occurred which turned out to be very auspicious. It was a fortunate incident. The incident occurred long back. It happened in the past but is narrated in kaliyug. It is the tale of a devastating war. A war in which swords were wielded like lightning and spears and arrows flew through the air like slashing rain. The narrator narrates the tale.





(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Arjhan had gone to the netherworld. He was away from his brothers. Balo Himmat died in the battlefield. Ill was done in the world. When Arjhan returned from paataal, Hodra beheld him. The sight of her consort revived her grief. Tears flowed incessantly from her eyes. A surprised Arjhan asked the reason for her suffering. 'An inauspicious shadow has descended on us,' said Hodra, 'Our son has become a martyr in the war.' Grief-stricken, Arjhan hit his head against a slab of stone. He cursed Avtar for his plight, 'O Kasma Avtar, why did you give me a son when you were determined to snatch him away? You have been unkind to me. Ill has been done in the world,' lamented Arjhan. Upset and agitated, Arjhan took the path to the cremation ground. With short steps and long strides, he arrived at the cremation ground. Hurriedly, he went to the cremation ground and cried his heart out. Arjhan could not control himself. Everyday he went there and cried inconsolably. Kasma Avtar had planned a dramatic design that unfolded with time. He wanted the tale to continue.

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! One day, the crematorium spoke to the grieving Pandav prince, 'O Arjhan, listen to what I say. *Baku pharu bakalaru*.⁵⁷ Why do you diminish your worth?' Arjhan looked around in amazement. He could not see anyone. 'Who's speaking in riddles?' thought he. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends. May you rule over this world for a million years! When someone narrates a tale, you must accompany him with utmost sincerity. Then alone can a tale be told.

Arjhan cried inconsolably.

He cried inconsolably.

At the crematory, he wailed miserably.

Almighty God wanted the tale to continue.

He wanted the tale to continue.





He made the crematorium speak to Arjhan.

The crematorium spoke one day.

It spoke one day.

‘Listen to what I say.’

‘Why do you come and cry here everyday?

Why do you come and cry here everyday?’

The crematorium spoke in the voice of Balo.

‘Why do you cry everyday for my sake, O father?

Why do you cry everyday for my sake?

Why do you lament for me?’

‘I was born to you just once, O father.

I was born to you just once.

Why do you mourn for me?’

‘Seven times were you born in my household.

Seven times were you born in my household.

Why do you mourn for me?’

‘Turn your heart away from what is over, O Arjhan.

Turn your heart away from what is over.

Stop coming to the cremation ground.’

‘Who’s speaking so?

Who’s speaking so?’

Thought Arjhan in amazement.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

The cremation ground spoke in the voice of Balo, ‘Why do you come here everyday to mourn my death, O father? Listen to what





I say. Why do you cry so?' Arjhan listened intently and said, 'Who are you to speak thus to me? My only son died in the war. I can't banish his memory from my mind. This is why I come here and cry everyday.' (*Tambur*) O maharaj! The crematorium came alive to echo the feelings of the dead Balo. Once again it said, 'You were my father in this birth. I was born as your son. But stop lamenting over my death. Are you aware that I was born in your house only once, but you were my son in your past seven births? I suffered your loss seven times, yet I never wasted my life in your memory. And look at you, everyday you shed tears for my sake. Turn your heart away from what is over, O father.' Balo's words shook Arjhan to the core. He stood numb, rooted to the ground like a tree ripped apart by a mighty elephant. The crematorium spoke again, 'O father, *baku pharu bakalaru*. Why do you diminish your worth? Wind back your way home. Wend your way to your palace in Asanapari. You doted on me when I was your son. But now no relationship exists between us.' The crematorium opened the eyes of the Pandav prince. Arjhan was purged of his grief. He turned on his heels to go home. He started walking towards Asanapari. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

Arjhan returned from the crematorium.

He returned from the crematorium.

Hurriedly, he wended his way back to his palace.

Arjhan spoke to Hodra.

He spoke to Hodra.

'Listen to what I say, O queen.'

'Do not shed tears over our son, O queen.

Do not shed tears over our son.

Do not cry over what has happened.'





'Our child has opened my eyes, O queen.
He has opened my eyes.
None should weep for his sake.'

'A brood of five brothers, O queen.
A brood of five brothers,
We are the sons of Kutma, the queen mother.'

'The five of us stand firm like pillars, O queen.
The five of us stand firm like pillars.
Why should one grieve over what does not exist?'

Arjhan went to the royal court.
He went to the royal court.
He spoke to his brothers.

'Listen to what I say, O brothers,
Listen to what I say.
Don't shed tears for my son.'

Jeevta! Bhalai!

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Arjhan returned to his cloud-capped palace. He said to Hodra, 'Listen to what I say, O queen. Ill has been done in the world. We cried our eyes out for the sake of our son. I used to walk up to the cremation ground and cry till sundown. But today, the crematorium came alive and spoke to me. It was amazing. It spoke in the voice of our son. It told me that he was ours till he walked on this earth. But now he is no longer between us. So we should not grieve his death. We, the five Pandav brothers, are as strong as the pillars that bear the earth. None can bend us. It is not wise to waste our time shedding tears over a dead child.' Arjhan said so to Hodra and intently she listened to him.





(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Arjhan went to the royal court. He spoke to his four brothers, 'Listen to what I say, O brothers. Better not grieve the death of Balo. He belonged to us while he was alive. But now we are bereaved. We are a brood of five brothers. We are the sons of Kutma, the queen mother. We are sired by truth. If ever the sky breaks loose and falls, we are capable of restoring it. Why should we shed tears over the death of a small child?' Thus Arjhan said to his brothers and intently they listened to him. Bhemo, the Pandav prince, turned his moustache and started talking about the exploits of brave people. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

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EPISODE OF KASNA AVTAR AND ARJHAN

Warmly they welcomed Avtar,
Warmly they welcome Avtar,
Respectfully, they led him in.

The Pandavs ushered Kasna Avtar to court.
They ushered Kasna Avtar to court.
Avtar sat on a tasseled rug.

Arjhan said to Avtar,
He said to Avtar,
'Listen to what I say.'

'Make yourself comfortable, O Avtar.
Make yourself comfortable.
We are at your disposal.'

Kasna Avtar sat on the mattress.
He sat on the mattress.
He sat in the court of the Pandav princes.

Green and yellow mattresses,
Green and yellow mattresses,
Avtar took his seat on the mattress.





(An accompanist: The Lord sat on a mattress. The lead singer:
Khama!)

Avtar said to Arjhan,
He said to Arjhan,
'Listen to what I say.'

'I saw something incredible while coming here.
I saw something incredible while coming here.
Should I tell you about it?'

'Would you believe me, O Arjhan?
Would you believe me?
Will you trust my words?'

'An ant was wearing anklets.
An ant was wearing anklets.
They made jingling sounds as she walked.'

Arjhan said to Avtar,
He said to Avtar,
'Listen to what I say, O Avtar.'

'People of this world may tell white lies.
People of this world may tell white lies.
But we never expected that of you, O Avtar.'

'The tale does not end here, O Pandav princes.
The tale does not end here.
Let me finish my tale,' said Avtar.

'Whether you believe it or not,
Whether you believe it or not,
The ant gave birth to an elephant.'





Kasna Avtar recounted what he saw.
He recounted what he saw.
But the Pandavs refused to believe him.

‘People of this world may tell white lies, O Avtar.
People of this world may tell white lies.
But we never expected that of you,’ said the Pandav princes.

‘O Arjhan, listen further to what I say,’ said Avtar.
‘Listen further to what I say.
My tale does not end here.’

‘While the elephant was passing through a door,
While he was passing through a door,
His tail got wedged in the door.’

Arjhan said to Avtar,
He said to Avtar,
‘From where did you pick such a tale, O Avtar?’

‘Who would believe, O Avtar,
Who would believe,
That an ant gave birth to an elephant?’

Jeevta! Bhalai!

(Tambur) O maharaj!

The Pandavs ruled over Asanapari. One day Avtar came to Asanapari. Hurriedly, he tore up the road. He walked through the streets and alleyways. The Pandavs saw him coming from a distance. They sprang to their feet and went forward to receive Avtar. They went to the marketplace. They warmly embraced their guest. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* The Pandavs ushered Avtar to their royal court. *Khama!*





Green and yellow rugs were spread on the floor. Avtar and the Pandavs sat on the tasseled rugs. Avtar said to the Pandavs, 'Listen to what I say. I witnessed an incredible spectacle on my way to your place. Should I tell you about it? But will you believe me?' Arjhan said, 'When Avtar himself is telling something, why we should not believe it?' (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Kasna Avtar said to the Pandav princes, 'I came across an ant with anklets jingling on her feet.' Arjhan interrupted Avtar, 'The world may lie but why should Avtar tell us a made up tale?' *Khama*!

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! 'And that is not all, O Arjhan,' said Avtar, 'Believe it or not, the ant bore an elephant.' Arjhan intervened once again and said, 'People of this world often lie but why did you have to tell us a white lie, O Avtar?'

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Kasna Avtar said, 'That's not all. I have not finished. While passing through a door, the tail of the elephant got wedged into the door. However hard he tried, he could not pull out his tail. Believe me, I'm not lying.' But Arjhan, the Pandav prince, would not believe a word. Avtar and Arjhan debated for sometime. 'Why can't you trust my words?' said Avtar. 'None can believe such made up tales, O Avtar,' replied the Pandav prince. Avtar said, 'But you at least agree that the ant can bear an elephant, don't you, O Arjhan?' 'I don't see a grain of truth in it. Why do you want us to believe such a tale?' said Arjhan. Avtar pondered for a while, 'The Pandavs won't trust my words unless I prove it.' May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

Kutma, the queen mother,
Kutma, the queen mother,
She was busy cooking a meal.

Avtar said to Arjhan,
He said to Arjhan,





‘Listen to what I say.’

‘While the meal is being prepared, O Arjhan,

‘While the meal is being prepared,

Let’s go for a dip in the Ganga.’

(An accompanist: Inscrutable are the ways of the Almighty Lord.
The lead singer: *Khama!*)

Arjhan and Avtar went for a dip.

They went for a dip.

They took the way to the river Ganga.

They arrived at the banks of the river.

They arrived at the banks of the river.

They removed their clothes.

Arjhan and Avtar plunged into the water.

They plunged into the water.

They bathed in the water of the Ganga.

Avtar took a dip in the river.

He took a dip in the river.

Suddenly, he disappeared.

Arjhan plunged into the water.

He plunged into the water.

He started drowning.

Arjhan struggled to come out.

He struggled to come out.

He resurfaced after much effort.

As he emerged from the water,

As he emerged from the water,





He found himself transformed.

Long flowing hair had grown on his head.

Long flowing hair had grown on his head.

He had developed breasts on his chest.

Arjhan had been transformed into a woman.

He had been transformed into a woman.

He stood dazed.

Arjhan pondered for a while.

He pondered for a while.

'I can't believe my eyes!'

Suddenly, Arjhan gave birth to a child.

He gave birth to a child.

A child was born to him.

Arjhan mothered many children.

He mothered many children.

He had a dozen kids in no time.

(An accompanist: Now you'll realize. The lead singer: *Khama!*)

Arjhan gave birth to twelve children.

He gave birth to twelve children.

He pondered for a while.

'What miracle is this?

What miracle is this?

I have given birth to children.'

Avtar appeared before him.

He appeared before him.

'Listen to what I say, O Arjhan,' said he.





'A dozen children have been born to you, O Arjhan.
A dozen children have been born to you.
Who'd believe such an occurrence?'

Arjhan knelt down in supplication to Avtar.
He knelt down in supplication to Avtar.
'Listen to what I say, O Avtar.'

Jeevta! Bhalai!

(Tambur) O maharaj !

The Pandavs ruled over Asanapari. One day, Kasma Avtar visited their kingdom. Avtar told them about what he had seen. But the Pandavs thought that Avtar was making up a story. They refused to believe what Avtar claimed to be true. Kasma Avtar pondered for a while, 'The Pandavs do not take my words seriously. I need to work out a miracle.' *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Kutma, the queen mother was patting rotlas for them. Kasma Avtar said to Arjhan, 'There is still time for the meal to be served. Let us go to the river Ganga to have a bath.' They rose to leave for the river bank. Kutma was patting a rotla. She placed the patted rotla on a *tawa* to cook it over the flames. Avtar and Arjhan left for the river while Kutma was busy preparing a meal. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Kasma Avtar and Arjhan removed their clothes and stepped into the water of the Ganga. They took several dips in the water. Suddenly, Avtar disappeared. As Arjhan emerged out of the water, he found himself transformed into a woman. Long flowing hair adorned his head. And a pair of breasts grew on his chest. His skin became smooth and fair. Arjhan could not take his eyes off his soft hands. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Arjhan became a damsel, delicate and fair. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Arjhan pondered for a while, 'What kind of miracle is this? I can't believe my eyes.' Suddenly, his belly swelled





and a child emerged from within. 'This is incredible!' thought he, 'I've given birth to a child.' In a short while a couple of more children were born to him. In no time he had mothered a dozen kids. (*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* Arjhan pondered for a while, 'I can't show my face to anyone. Where shall I go? What shall I do?' *Khama!* Arjhan gave birth to twelve children. The children surrounded Arjhan. One demanded a roti, the other asked for some milk. The third one was small and wanted to suckle its mother. The children nagged Arjhan for food. Surrounded by his offsprings, Arjhan, the Pandav prince, stood dazed. Avtar appeared before him and mocked him. Arjhan caught sight of Avtar. Beseeching Avtar he said, 'Inscrutable are your ways, O Lord! What have you done to me? I am mortified and embarrassed.' *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* Kasna Avtar gave Arjhan a pat and transformed him back to his earlier self. They took a bath and wended their way back to the royal court. Kutma was still turning over the first rotlo on the earthen tawa. In a brief moment they had returned. (*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* Arjhan pondered for a while, 'The first rotla is still on the flame and we are back. We have bathed twice and I gave birth to a dozen children during this short while. Indeed, inscrutable are the ways of God!' May you be well, *O honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends. *Khama!*

Kutma prepared thirty-two kinds of dishes.

She prepared thirty-two kinds of dishes.

'Listen to what I say,' said she.

'The meal is ready, O Avtar.

The meal is ready, O Avtar.

Kindly come and eat.'

Avtar and the Pandav brothers,

Avtar and the Pandav brothers,





They ate to their hearts' content.

After having their meal,
After having their meal,
They returned to the royal court.

'Listen to what I say, O Pandavs,' said Avtar.
'Listen to what I say.
May you prosper forever.'

'But I'll return to my abode, O Pandavs.
But I'll return to my abode.
If you don't believe my tale, I'll go back.'

'Listen to what I say, O Avtar,' said Arjhan.
'Listen to what I say.
What you said was incredible.'

'An ant can't bear an elephant, O Avtar.
An ant can't bear an elephant.
How can we trust your words?'

'And when the elephant managed to pass through a door,
And when he managed to pass through a door,
How could his tail get caught in the door?'

(An accompanist: Is the tail heftier than the elephant? The lead singer: *Khama!*)

'What you relate can't be true, O Avtar.
What you relate can't be true.
How can one believe such happenings?'





(*Tambur*) *O maharaj!*

As Karna Avtar and Arjhan returned from the river, Kutma said, 'I have prepared thirty-two kinds of savouries. Why don't you have your meal?' She laid the food on platters and the Pandav brothers and Karna Avtar dined together. After having their meal they returned to the royal assembly. Karna Avtar said to the Pandav princes, 'May you prosper forever. I wish you well. But I can't stay in your place any longer if you refuse to believe my tale.'

(*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* Arjhan replied, 'Lord, you claim to have seen an ant bearing an elephant. And that elephant passed through a door but his tail got stuck. How can the tail of an elephant be heftier than its body?' *Khama!* Karna Avtar said, 'O Arjhan, why did I take you to have a dip? You are still not cured of your ignorance. I'll make things explicit for you. When a mother gives birth to a child, the child, quite large in size, gets delivered. But a part of its umbilical cord that links the child with its mother, gets stuck in the mother's womb. Isn't that true?' The Pandavs nodded in agreement. 'But what about the tale of an ant bearing an elephant?' asked Arjhan. 'The seed of a banyan tree is the size of an ant. But when we sow the seed, a banyan tree, the size of an elephant grows from it. Isn't that true?' The Pandavs again nodded their heads in agreement. Avtar imparted words of wisdom and bade farewell to the Pandav princes. He left for Vaikunthpuri. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* On his way Avtar pondered for a while, 'All the Pandavs have realized the truth but Arjhan still seems to be in doubt. He is not fully convinced.' He performed a miracle. One half of his body transformed into a horse and the other half turned into a horse trader. Karna Avtar returned to Asanapari and headed for the mango grove. *Khama!*





In the guise of a horse merchant,
In the guise of a horse merchant,
Kasna Avtar came to the glistening green garden.

A part of Kasna Avtar turned into a horse.
A part of him turned into a horse.
The horse danced on his hooves.

Avtar disguised as a trader.
Disguised as a trader,
He came to Asanapari.

Avtar camped at the mango grove.
He camped at the mango grove.
He pretended to be a trader of horses.

People talked among themselves.
People talked among themselves.
This horse is not for people like us.

A yellow and green hued horse,
A yellow and green hued horse,
He was agile on his hooves.

‘The horse is suitable for the Pandavs,’ said the people.
‘The horse is suitable for the Pandavs.
It’s not for banias and brahmans like ourselves.’

The Pandavs heard about the horse.
They heard about the horse.
They came to the garden.

The Pandavs were charmed by the horse.
They were charmed by the horse.





They observed him strutting on his hooves.

Jeevta! Bhalai!

A merchant of horses,
A merchant of horses,
A merchant of horses arrived in Asanapari.

He wandered in the streets and alleyways.
He wandered in the streets and alleyways.
He wanted to sell his horse.

The common men of the town,
The common men of the town,
Nodded their heads.

‘This horse is suitable for the royal stable.
This horse is suitable for the royal stable.
Only the Pandavs can afford to buy it.’

The Pandavs and their mother,
The Pandavs and their mother,
They heard about the horse.

They came to the mango grove.
They came to the mango grove.
They came to see the horse.

‘Listen to what we say, O merchant,’ said they.
‘Listen to what we say.
What is the price of this horse?’

Sadev, the Pandav prince,
Sadev, the Pandav prince,
Asked the merchant to name his price.





The merchant said to the Pandav princes,
He said to the Pandav princes,
'Listen to what I say.'

'Before we negotiate the price,' said the merchant.
'Before we negotiate the price,
Why don't you try the horse?'

(An accompanist: First ride the horse. The lead singer: *Khama!*)

Sadev, the Pandav, tried to mount the horse.
He tried to mount the horse.
But the horse did not allow him to mount it.

Nakro, the Pandav, was the next to try.
Nakro, the Pandav, was the next to try.
But the horse did not allow him to saddle it.

Jeevta! Bhalai!

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Avtar himself took the form of a horse. And he became a trader as well. The horse gracefully strutted on its hooves and people gathered to watch. 'We cannot afford to buy such a horse. Only the Pandavs can pay the price for it,' said the banias and the brahmans of the town. They sent word to the Pandavs. The Pandav were eager to see the horse. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* The Pandavs heard about the horse. They arrived at the mango grove. Moving around the horse, they observed it closely. The horse was agile on its hooves. Gracefully, he strutted about. The Pandavs said to the merchant, 'Name your price and sell us the horse.' *(Tambur) O maharaj!* 'This is not an ordinary horse, you better try him before we negotiate the price,' said the merchant of the horse.





(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Sadev, the Pandav, came forward and patted the horse on his back. But the horse turned away and would not let Sadev to mount it. Nakro came to try the horse but the horse did not allow him to touch it. Karan,⁵⁸ the Pandav, stepped forward. He stroked the horse before mounting. But the horse shrank from his touch. Jethodar, the son of Dharma came close but the horse did not let him mount it. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Arjhan, the Pandav prince, came forward. He stroked the horse and the horse strutted on its hooves. Arjhan observed the horse with keen eyes and asked the trader to name the price. The merchant nodded and said, 'Not before you mount it and have a ride.' With a clear jerk, Arjhan mounted the horse. The horse trotted around in the mango grove. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

Arjhan, the Pandav prince, mounted the horse.

He mounted the horse.

He cantered around in the mango grove.

Gracefully, the horse strutted on its hooves.

Gracefully, he strutted on its hooves.

He circled around in the mango grove.

Suddenly, the horse took wing.

He rose up in the air.

He started to fly in the air.

Rising high, he soared on the celestial wind.

Rising high, he soared on the celestial wind.

He went as high as the heaven in the sky.

The horse soared on the heavenly wind.

He soared on the heavenly wind.

Arjhan pondered for a while.





(An accompanist: Inscrutable are the ways of the Almighty Lord.
The lead singer: *Khama!*)

‘The horse is flying at great speed,’ thought Arjhan.

‘The horse is flying at great speed.

What kind of miracle is this?’

The horse arrived in the wilderness.

He arrived in the wilderness.

He flew over the Kadli forest.

As the horse was flying over the forest,

As he was flying over the forest,

Arjhan pondered for a while.

‘This is awesome, O Lord,

This is awesome, O Lord,

Your capricious ways are beyond my grasp.’

Arjhan looked downward.

He looked downward.

He beheld a deep ocean.

The horse started descending.

The horse started descending.

He flew down to the ocean.

The horse landed upon the sea.

He landed upon the sea water.

He came down amid the ocean.

Bhalai! Jeevta!





(Tambur) O maharaj!

Arjhan, the Pandav prince, mounted the horse. The horse started trotting around. He moved in a circle for some time. Arjhan cantered on the horse in the mango grove. Suddenly, the horse galloped swiftly and rose in the air. *Khama! (Tambur) O maharaj!* The horse took wing and started moving upward. Arjhan pondered for a while, 'This is spectacular.' Soaring along on the celestial wind, the horse flew with tremendous speed. 'I shall surely die if I am tipped off the horse. This horse is not in my control. I wonder where he'll carry me.' *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Arjhan trembled like dried leaves. The horse continued to fly. Arjhan glanced below and beheld a roaring ocean. Arjhan could not see anything but sea water around him. Arjhan pondered for a while, 'Ill has been done in the world. How will I make it to Asanapari?' *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Arjhan was famished. Thirsty and hungry, he was dying of fright. The horse had covered a distance of twenty-four *yojan*. They had come from far away from Asanapari. Suddenly, the horse started to descend. Arjhan trembled with fear. 'The sea will claim my life,' thought he, 'The horse is not in my command. He seems to want to land in the ocean.' *(Tambur) O maharaj!* The horse flew down with awesome speed. He landed on a rock. Arjhan was dying of thirst. He dismounted and sat on his haunches. He took the sea water in his cupped hands and drank it to slake his thirst. He sipped the water to wet his lips and looked behind him. And what did he find? The horse had melted into thin air, leaving him behind amidst the water.

(Tambur) O maharaj! Arjhan looked around him. He was surrounded by water. Arjhan stood encompassed by a surging sea. He saw water in all the four directions. Arjhan pondered for a while, 'How shall I survive? How shall I get back to Asanapari?' His body quivered with fright. *Khama! (Tambur) O maharaj!* 'Am I dreaming?' thought





the Pandav prince. 'A short while ago I was in Asanapari. A horse merchant arrived at our mango grove. And along with my brothers, I was watching the horse strutting on its hooves. I mounted the horse and he took wings. And now I stand here, surrounded by sea water. What kind of dream is this? I can't decide whether I am asleep or wide awake.' Suddenly, the surface of the water parted and a girl emerged from it. 'I wish you well, my beloved, may you enjoy a long life,' said the girl, 'You are welcome to my house, O Arjhan. I have been waiting for you for a long time.' *Khama!*

Jal Jogni spoke to the Pandav prince.

She spoke to the Pandav prince.

'Listen to what I say.'

'I welcome you to my domain, O Arjhan.

I welcome you to my domain.

Let's marry and live a happy life.'

(An accompanist: You are my sweetheart. The lead singer: *Khama!*)

'Listen to what I say, O deity of the water,' said Arjhan.

'Listen to what I say.

I am Arjhan, a Pandav prince.'

'I am a ruler of Asanapari, O deity of the water!

I am a ruler of Asanapari.

Think before you speak.'

'You may be a Goddess or a witch, O Jal Jogni.

You may be a Goddess or a witch.

But don't try to cross your limit.'

'Listen to what I say, O Arjhan.





Listen to what I say.
I am the deity of this water.'

'Unless you agree to marry me, O Arjhan,
Unless you agree to marry me,
I'll devour you alive.'

(An accompanist: Pay heed to what she says. The lead singer:
Khama!)

The deity took a demonic form.
She took a demonic form.
She changed her appearance.

With bulging eyes and crooked teeth,
With bulging eyes and crooked teeth,
She lunged at the Pandav prince.

'I'll devour you, O Arjhan.
'I'll devour you,' said she.
'Spare my life, O deity,' cried Arjhan.

Arjhan stood with folded hands.
He stood with folded hands.
'I'll agree to whatever you say,' said he.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Arjhan quivered amidst the sea water. Jal Jogni appeared before him. 'O Arjhan, I have been waiting for you for twelve long years. I have been chanting your name night and day. Welcome to my abode. Let us get married,' said she. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Arjhan said, 'O Jal Jogni, I don't know whether you are a deity or a witch. I am not sure whether you are a ghoul or a banshee. But mind your language. I





am Arjhan, a Pandav prince. I am a ruler of Asanapari. I won't err on this side of the world by marrying you. Do not even utter such an offensive thought.' (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Jal Jogni took a demonic form. With her long crooked teeth and bulging eyeballs, she lunged at the Pandav. 'I'll devour you here and now,' said she. Arjhan shuddered with fear. With folded hands he bowed to Jal Jogni and stammered, 'Please don't eat me, I wish to live. I'll obey all your commands. I'll satisfy all your demands, O deity.' *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Arjhan was stranded in the sea. There was no way to escape. He could not afford to offend Jal Jogni. An awestruck Arjhan stood with folded hands. In a meek voice he said, 'O deity, I promise to obey your command. I'll satisfy all your demands.' Jal Jogni said, 'O Arjhan, I have waited for you for twelve long years. Come along with me to my abode and spend the night with me.' A frightened Arjhan complied. He slept with Jal Jogni. Inscrutable are the ways of God. None can fathom the design of the Lord of the three worlds. As he slept with Jal Jogni, a child was born to her. In a short while, one after the other, a quarter and a hundred children were born to them. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The children surrounded their father. One hung on his shoulder, another tried to climb up his back. Yet another asked for food. The children nagged Arjhan for various things. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Arjhan pondered for a while, 'Am I asleep or awake? What kind of delusion is this? Whose children are these? They can't be mine!' Arjhan lamented his plight. He prayed to Avtar to help him. 'O Kasma Avtar, the king of Vaikunthpuri, unfathomable are your ways! Come to my help and get me back to Asanapari.' (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Arjhan prayed to Avtar. Suddenly, the sea water started to recede. Arjhan strode out of the water. *Khama!* Arjhan walked away from the ocean. 'Don't leave us behind, O father,' shouted the kids, 'Take us along with you.' Shouting and whining, the children followed him. *Khama!*





(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Arjhan pondered for a while. Rolling up his clothes, Arjhan started to run. He wanted to give the children a skip. But the kids and their mother pursued him. 'O my spouse,' shouted Jal Jogni, 'May you be condemned! You are the father of my offsprings. You made a virgin give birth to a hundred and twenty children. How can you now run away from us? We shall come with you. We won't let you walk out of our lives.' *Khama!*

Arjhan slowed and turned around.
He slowed and turned around.
His children were pursuing him.

The kids followed him.
They followed him.
Their mother shouted at him.

'Listen to what I say, O Arjhan.
'Listen to what I say.
Let the children accompany you.'

'Listen to what I say, O deity,' said Arjhan.
'Listen to what I say.
I cannot take them with me.'

'They are too young to go with me, O queen.
They are too young to go with me.
I can't take them along.'

'A mother is responsible for young children.
A mother is responsible for young children.
A father becomes accountable only when they grow up.'

'We'll go with you to Asanapari, O Arjhan.'





We'll go with you to Asanapari.'

Insisted Jal Jogni.

'Stay here in this forest, O queen,' said Arjhan.

'Stay here in this forest.

I make you sovereign of this land.'

'I declare you the ruler of this forest, O queen!

I declare you the ruler of this forest.

Live here in peace and prosper.'

Leaving behind the kids and their mother,

Leaving behind the kids and their mother,

Arjhan took the way to Asanapari.

Hurriedly, he tore up the path.

Hurriedly, he tore up the path.

And arrived in Asanapari.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Arjhan tried to walk away from the children. The mother of the kids said, 'Why are you running away from us?' Arjhan said, 'Rearing young kids is a mother's responsibility. The father is accountable for grown up children. I declare you the ruler of this land. Stay behind and take care of the children.' But Jal Jogni persisted, 'I won't let you go like this. I have borne your children. I was a virgin deity. I mothered a hundred and twenty children because you forced me to do so. How can you simply walk out of my life? How can you dream of returning to your kingdom? You have committed a sin. You have erred on this side of the world. Where will I go with these children of yours? Take us along to Asanapari.' *Khama!* Arjhan pondered for a while, 'How can I get rid of these kids? What sort of a miracle is this? I cannot even think of going to Asanapari with this army of





children. I will die of shame. I can't show my face to anyone. What will my brothers say? How will my mother respond?' Arjhan cajoled Jal Jogni to stay behind. He bounded for Asanapari with hasty steps. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The Pandav court was in session. They were engrossed in relating tales of bravery. Avtar was sitting on the golden throne. He saw Arjhan coming to court. Jeering at Arjhan he said, 'Don't step inside the royal court, O Arjhan. You are stinking. You seem to have had intercourse. You emanate its odour. Don't defile the court by your presence.' Arjhan checked himself and withdrew. He pondered for a while, 'Ill has been done in the world.' He felt embarrassed.

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MAMERA OF DHARMA'S DAUGHTER

With his long staff Bhemo set out.
With his long staff Bhemo set out.
He set out to graze a herd of elephants.

Bhemo led his elephants to the grazing ground.
He led his elephants to the grazing ground.
He set out with his herd towards the pastures.

Hurriedly, he tore up the way.
Hurriedly, he tore up the way.
He led the herd to a pasture by the sea.

Bhemo led the elephants to the ocean.
He led the elephants to the ocean.
Bhemo arrived at the Ratnagar Ocean.

Bhemo stopped by the ocean.
He stopped by the ocean.
He stopped at a pasture by the ocean.

The Sun coursed upward in the sky.
The Sun coursed upward in the sky.
Scorching mid-day Sun shone in the sky.





Bhemo beheld a shady tree.
He beheld a shady tree.
He walked towards its canopy.

(An accompanist: He is feeling hot. The lead singer: *Khama!*)

Bhemo spread his quilt under the tree.
He spread his quilt under the tree.
In the shade of the tree reclined he.

The eastern wind blew across his face.
The eastern wind blew across his face.
Cool and soothing breeze caressed Bhemo's face.

Soon Bhemo drifted into slumber.
He drifted into slumber.
Bhemo fell fast asleep under the tree.

Bhemo started snoring gently.
He started snoring gently.
He snored gently by the sea.

While Bhemo was asleep,
While he was asleep,
A woman called Dharma arrived at the shore.

Sitting by the ocean,
Sitting by the ocean,
Dharma started lamenting.

'My daughter is getting married.
My daughter is getting married.
And the wedding day is approaching.'

'But my sisters-in-law slash me with banter.'





They slash me with banter.
They have made my life miserable.'

'I don't have any siblings, O Lord.
I don't have any siblings.
I am without siblings.'

'I have no brother to look after me.
I have no brother to look after me.
O God, why did you not give me a brother?'

'A sister needs a brother by her side, O Lord.
A sister needs a brother by her side.
She needs someone to fend for her.'

'Who'll perform the ceremony of *mamera*?
Who'll perform the ceremony of *mamera*?
There is no one to carry out *mamera* for my daughter.'

'Why do I alone have no brothers?
Why do I alone have no brothers?
Why am I not so fortunate?'

The sound of her wailing interrupted Bhemo's sleep.
The sound of her wailing interrupted Bhemo's sleep.
He stirred from his slumber.

'Some ill-fated person is lamenting,' thought Bhemo.
'Some ill-fated person is lamenting.
Someone is weeping by the sea.'

Bhemo went towards the sea.
He went towards the sea.
'Who's weeping by the sea?' wondered he.





Bhemo beheld Dharma.

He beheld Dharma.

He found Dharma crying at the sea shore.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Bhemo, holding a long staff, reached the sea. The cool and soothing sea breeze made his eyelids droop. Soon Bhemo drifted into sleep. Bhemo's arms were like the branches of a mighty banyan tree. His thighs were as huge as the pillars of a palace. His face seemed like the full moon and his pointed nose looked like a flame of fire. His dark bushy moustache stretched across his face and his deep dark eyes were burning bright. His well-built body looked like the summit of Mount Abu. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Bhemo was in deep slumber. His snores sounded like cascading water.

(Tambur) O maharaj! Dharma came down to the ocean. Her sisters-in-law had been harsh to her. They slighted her for not having brothers. 'You unlucky vamp! You have no brothers,' said they, 'And you wish to arrange your daughter's wedding? Who'll perform her mamera ceremony? And if none come, the ceremony will remain unperformed. That, of course, is a terrible violation of tradition. You've brought ill luck to our family.' A thwarted Dharma ran towards the ocean. She could not hold back her tears. She wept long and bitterly, 'O merciful Lord, why didn't I have any siblings? Never ever let this happen to anyone else. Either a mother should bear a pair of brother and sister or she should not have children at all. My plight is indeed miserable.'

(Tambur) O maharaj! Dharma wept and wailed. She beat her breast in frustration. Bhemo was fast asleep under a nearby tree. He heard the sound of weeping. He sprang to his feet and strained his eyes to look around. He moved along the brink of the ocean to find the source of the wailing sound. He saw Dharma from a distance. He





turned towards her. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! 'Why are you so upset, O woman? What ails you? Why do you cry inconsolably? Tell me the tale of your woe,' said Bhemo. 'Why don't you mind your own business, O fatso,' said Dharma, 'You won't be able to lessen my woes, so why do you poke your nose in my affairs?' Her words annoyed Bhemo. A wave of fury surged from his toes to the tips of his hair. 'O woman, mind your tongue. I merely asked you to share your woe. I may be of help to you.'

Bhemo spoke to Dharma.

He spoke to Dharma.

'Listen to what I say.'

'Why are you crying inconsolably, O woman?

Why are you crying inconsolably?

Tell me the tale of your woe.'

'Why should I rub my woe on anyone?' said Dharma.

'Why should I rub my woe on anyone?

Do you think you can lighten it?'

(An accompanist: She has no brothers. The lead singer: *Khama*!)

'I have no brothers.

I have no brothers.

There's none whom I can call brother.'

'I lament my plight, O brother!

I lament my plight.

I have arranged for my daughter's nuptials.'

'My sisters-in-law, O brother,

My sisters-in-law,

They have made my life miserable.'





'They call me ill-fated, O brother!
They call me ill-fated.
They say that I have brought misfortune to the family.'

Tears coursed down Dharma's cheeks.
Tears course down her cheeks.
She cried incessantly.

'We are a brood of five brothers,' said Bhemo.
'We are a brood of five brothers.
We don't have any sister.'

'I'll stand by you, O sister.
I'll stand by you.
I'll be your solemnly adopted brother.'

Dharma tied a thread around Bhemo's wrist.
She tied a thread around Bhemo's wrist.
Bhemo adopted her as his solemnly adopted sister.

'At the time of the wedding, O sister,' said Bhemo.
'At the time of the wedding,
Send me an invitation.'

'I am a Pandav prince of Asanapari, O sister.
I am a Pandav of Asanapari.
Send me word at the time of the wedding.'

'I live in Gorna Gadh, O brother,' said Dharma.
'I live in Gorna Gadh.
Please do honour my invitation.'

'When I invite you, O brother,
When I invite you,





Do come with a mamera for my daughter.'

Bhemo reassured Dharma about the mamera ceremony.

He reassured Dharma about the mamera ceremony.

He gave her his word.

'Whenever you send for me, O sister,' said he,

'Whenever you send for me,

I'll be sure to come.'

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Bhemo saw Dharma lamenting by the sea. Hurriedly, he went to her. He asked her why she was crying incessantly. 'Weeping so is not going to help you much,' said he. 'Share your grief with me and I'll try to lighten your woes.' 'The wedding of my daughter, Telsi, has been arranged. But I have none to call my own from my parents' side. My sisters-in-law admonish me with sharp words. They deride me for not having brothers. They ask me who will perform the mamera ceremony for my daughter. I am worried about Telsi's marriage. Ill will be done if the mamera is not accomplished. No one can help me. Helpless and frustrated, I came here and am crying by the sea.' 'We are a brood of five brothers but we don't have any sisters. I am Bhemo, a Pandav prince. At the auspicious hour of performing the mamera for your daughter, send me an invitation at Asanapari. And I'll perform the ceremony in a manner that people in Gorna Gadh will speak about it for days to come. So many people will accompany me that all the water reservoirs of your city will be consumed by us. Do not forget to send grains of dyed rice as the token of invitation at the time of the wedding,' said Bhemo. Dharma tied a thread around Bhemo's wrist. Bhemo became her solemn adopted brother. Bhemo rounded up his herd of elephants and strolled on. Dharma returned to her house. *Khama!*





The wedding day approached at Gorna Gadh.
The wedding day approached at Gorna Gadh.
Dharma was busy preparing for the occasion.

Dharma remembered her brother.
She remembered her brother.
She thought of Bhemo while preparing for the wedding.

Dharma recalled Bhemo's words.
She recalled Bhemo's words.
She recollected what Bhemo had said to her.

'My brothers will stand by me.
They will stand by me.
They belong to a reputed family.'

'It is time to send invitations.
It is time to send invitations.
Grains of dyed rice should be sent to all.'

Dharma pondered for a while.
She pondered for a while.
'Who will take rice to my brother's place?'

The wedding day was approaching.
The wedding day was approaching.
Dharma's daughter was getting married.

Musical instruments were being played.
Musical instruments were being played.
The air of Gorna Gadh was thick with sweet sounds.

A wedding was to take place in Gorna Gadh.
A wedding was to take place in Gorna Gadh.





It was time for revelry.

The sound of musical instruments rent the air.

The sound of musical instruments rent the air.

The noise of revelry travelled across the ocean.

Dharma sent for a wise Brahman.

She sent for a wise Brahman.

She called a wise Brahman.

‘Why are you late, O Brahman?’ asked she.

‘Why are you late, O Brahman?’

There is no time for delay.’

Hurriedly, the Brahman arrived at Gorna Gadh.

Hurriedly, he arrived at Gorna Gadh.

He came to Gorna Gadh.

The Brahman headed straight for Dharma’s home.

He headed straight for Dharma’s home.

He stood at her doorstep.

With folded hands the Brahman stood at her door.

With folded hands he stood at her door.

The brahman arrived at Dharma’s home.

‘Why did you send for me, O lady?’ asked he.

‘Why did you send for me?’

For what important errand did you summon me?’

‘I’ll reward you generously, O brother,’ said Dharma.

‘I’ll reward you generously.

I’ll bestow on you many gifts.’





'Please do me a favour, O brother.
Please do me a favour.
Carry out a small errand for me.'

'Grains of dyed rice, O brother,
Grains of dyed rice,
Take the rice as a token of invitation.'

'Go to the house of my brothers, O Brahman.
Go to the house of my brothers.
Take the grains of rice to my brothers' place.'

'Where do your brothers live, O sister?
Where do your brothers live?
Tell me the whereabouts of your brothers.'

'My brothers live in Asanapari, O Brahman.
My brothers live in Asanapari.
My brothers belong to a prestigious family.'

'I won't go to Asanapari, O sister,' said the Brahman.
'I won't go to Asanapari,
I can't oblige you in this matter.'

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Dharma had arranged for Telsi's wedding. The sounds of the musical instruments travelled across the sea. The young men were busy buying combs. The girls lined their eyes with *kajal*. The widows eagerly purchased snuff powder. The elderly men strolled around the city, twirling their bushy moustaches. *Khama. (Tambur) O maharaj!* Dharma pondered for a while. 'I must send dyed rice to my brothers' place. But who will go with the invitation?' She sent for a wise Brahman. 'O Brahman, why are you so late? There is no time





to delay,' shouted she. The Brahman came with hasty steps. He stood at the doorstep of Dharma's home. With folded hands he said, 'Why did you send for me? For which important errand do you need my service?' Dharma said to him, 'Listen to what I say. There is no time for delay. I'll reward you generously if you carry out an important errand for me.' *Allah!*⁵⁹

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* 'Listen to me intently, O wise Brahman. Take dyed rice grains to my brothers' place. Invite them to my Telsi's wedding. Please tell them to come at the earliest.' The Brahman said, 'I'll do whatever you ask for, but where do your brothers live? Where should I go with the grains of rice?' 'The sovereigns of Asanapari are my brothers. I'm the sister of the valiant Pandav princes. Go with the rice and extend a warm invitation to them,' said she. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* *Baku pharu bakalaru.* The Brahman hesitated to reply. He pondered for a while. 'I am required to go to the Pandav land. But one never knows, if Bhemo is not in good humour he may break my skull.' He said aloud, 'O sister, I don't want to risk my life. I won't go on this errand. The mighty Bhemo's temper is unpredictable. He moves around with a banyan tree on his head. If annoyed, he may smash my head.' (*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* The Brahman refused to carry out the task for Dharma. 'Listen to what I say, O wise man,' said she, 'If you happen to meet Bhemo, tell him that I have sent you. He will receive you with warmth and affection. He will not touch even a lock of your hair.' May you be well, O *honkaria.* Life is short but the tale never ends.

The Brahman was worried.

He was worried.

He was reluctant to go to Asanapari.

But he could not say no.

But he could not say no.

He could not refuse Dharma.





Dharma picked up a quill and a piece of paper.
She picked up a quill and a piece of paper.
She sat down to scrawl a message.

Dharma began by conveying her regards.
She began by conveying her regards.
Then she wished her brothers well.

After inquiring about their well-being,
After inquiring about their well-being,
Dharma requested them to come at the earliest.

'Telsi's wedding is approaching, O brothers,' wrote she.
'Telsi's wedding is approaching.
My daughter Telsi is getting married.'

'Come soon to perform the mamera ceremony.
Come soon to perform the mamera ceremony.
It is a time to bestow her with gifts.'

Dharma wrote a letter to her brothers,
She wrote a letter to her brothers,
She handed the letter to the wise Brahman.

'Bring a *sapli* sari as a wedding gift, O brothers,' wrote she.
'Bring a *sapli* as a wedding gift.'
She requested for a *sapli* sari as a wedding gift.

The Brahman set out for Asanapari.
He set out for Asanapari.
He descended the steps of the cloud-capped palace.

The Brahman arrived at the marketplace.
He arrived in the marketplace.





He walked through the streets and alleyways.

The Brahman left the outskirts behind.

He left the outskirts behind.

He left the outskirts of Gorna Gadh behind.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

The Brahman refused to carry out the task for Dharma. Dharma requested him to go to Asanapari. She convinced him to go on the errand. She sat down to write an invitation for her brothers. She picked up a silver-encrusted quill. *Khama!* Dharma began by conveying her regards. Then she wished her brothers well. After inquiring about their well-being, Dharma requested them to come to Gorna Gadh for the mamera ceremony of her daughter, Telsi. 'I am hale and hearty, O brothers,' wrote she, 'But my sisters-in-law lash harsh words at me. They are unaware that none but the Pandavs are my brothers. Bestow your niece with a gift of sapli sari. Shower her with loads of wedding gifts. Come at the earliest to Gorna Gadh for the wedding ceremony of your niece.' Dharma finished the letter and folded it neatly. She handed it to the Brahman and said, 'Don't you worry about your safety, O Brahman. My brothers will take good care of you. Deliver this letter to my brothers and return as soon as you can.' The Brahman left for Asanapari. He felt nervous and anxious. With hasty steps he tore along. *Khama!*

The Brahman left for Asanapari.

He left for Asanapari.

Hurriedly, he tore along.

The Brahman walked with hasty steps.

He walked with hasty steps.

He walked towards the palace of the Pandav princes.





The Brahman asked the wayfarers,
He asked the wayfarers,
'How far is the kingdom of the Pandavs?'

At the outskirts of Asanapari,
At the outskirts of Asanapari,
He stopped outside the town for a good omen.

The Brahman noticed an auspicious sign.
He noticed an auspicious sign.
His apprehension eased as he saw a good omen.

Jeevta! Bhalai!

(Tambur) O maharaj!

The Brahman set off for his destination. An ill at ease Brahman tore along with hasty steps. His heart fluttered as he thought of Bhemo. 'How far is Asanapari from here?' asked he of a group of wayfarers. 'You are not far from the kingdom of the Pandavs. Keep walking until you see the towers of their palaces of clouds,' said they. The Brahman walked towards Asanapari. He wobbled on his legs. His knees became watery. He beheld the cloud-capped palaces from a distance. 'It seems I have nearly arrived,' pondered he. He halted at the outskirts. He pondered for a while, 'Have I made a mistake by coming here? I hope I do not have to confront Bhemo.' He prayed to the guardian deity of his family, 'O Goddess, I beseech you to be on my side. See that I return home unscratched. The laws of the Pandavs are very strict. I don't want to offend them.' He waited for an auspicious sign. He stopped outside the town for an omen. He heard a vennag's call to his right. A robin chirped on his left. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* The Brahman's apprehension eased. 'God is with me,' thought he. *Khama!*





The Brahman arrived at Asanapari.
He arrived at Asanapari.
He stopped outside the town for a good omen.

A vennag's call was heard on his right.
A vennag's call was heard on his right.
A robin chirped to his left.

A light-hearted Brahman entered the town.
A light-hearted Brahman entered the town.
'Where is the court of the Pandav princes?' asked he.

The Brahman took the way to the royal court.
He took the way to the royal court.
He arrived at the assembly of the Pandav princes.

The court of the Pandavs was busy.
The court of the Pandavs was busy.
Tales of bravery were being related.

The Pandavs were engrossed in a serious discussion.
They were engrossed in a serious discussion.
Kasna Avatar was conversing with the Pandav brothers.

The Brahman arrived at the court.
He arrived at the court.
He came near the royal court.

He entered the court and bowed respectfully.
He entered the court and bowed respectfully.
He greeted the Pandav princes.

'Why have you come to our court, O stranger?' asked Arjhan.
'Why have you come to our court?'





On what important errand have you come?’

‘I have come to convey a message, O prince.

I have come to convey a message.

For a day, I’ll be your guest,’ said the Brahman.

‘I have brought you an invitation, O prince.

I have brought you an invitation.

I have come here with grains of dyed rice.’

(Tambur) O maharaj!

The Brahman arrived at the marketplace. He inquired the way to the royal court. He arrived at the court of the Pandavs. He entered the court with timid steps. Standing in a corner, he bowed to the Pandav princes. The court was bustling with activity. Tales of bravery were being related. Arjhan saw the Brahman standing in a corner. ‘Who are you, O stranger?’ asked he, ‘Why have you come to our court? From where have you come and what is your destination?’ ‘Listen to what I say, O prince,’ said the Brahman, ‘This court is my destination. My long journey ends here. I’ll be your guest for a day. I have come here with an invitation.’ The Brahman brought out the letter from his sling bag and handed it to Arjhan. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Arjhan stared at the letter over and again. *Khama!* May you be well, *O honkaria.* Life is short but the tale never ends.

Arjhan opened the letter.

He opened the letter.

He stared at the letter in amazement.

Arjhan started reading the letter.

He started reading the letter.

He read Dharma’s letter.





Dharma had conveyed them her regards.
She had conveyed them her regards.
She had wished them prosperity.

Dharma had invited them for the wedding.
She had invited them for the wedding.
She had asked them to perform the ceremony of mamera.

‘Come at the earliest for the mamera,’ read Arjhan.
‘Come at the earliest for the mamera.
Come to attend the wedding of your niece.’

Arjhan pondered for a while.
He pondered for a while,
‘Which sister of mine has sent this invitation?’

‘We are a brood of five brothers.
We are a brood of five brothers.
From where has a sister turned up?’

‘We are just five brothers.
We are just five brothers.
We never had a sister.’

‘Whose daughter is claiming to be my sister?
Whose daughter is claiming to be my sister?
I cannot recollect having a sister.’

Arjhan pondered for a while.
He pondered for a while.
He decided to ask his brothers.

Arjhan called Nakro to the assembly.
He called Nakro to the assembly.





'Our sister has invited us for a wedding,' said he.

'But do we have a sister, O Arjhan?' asked Nakro.

'But do we have a sister?

I'm not aware of having a sister.'

'Let's ask Bhemo,' said Arjhan.

'Let's ask Bhemo.

Call Bhemo to the assembly.'

'Bhemo is not at home, O brother,' said Nakro.

'Bhemo is not home.

He has ventured out of Asanapari.'

'We better speak to our mother, O Nakro.

We better speak to our mother.

She should be able to tell us about this sister.'

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Arjhan, the Pandav prince, took the letter in his hand. He stared at it in amazement. He opened the letter and started reading it. He nodded his head in disbelief. 'We are a brood of five brothers. We never had a sister. Who is this sister who has sent us an invitation? But I better ask my brothers.' He called Nakro to the assembly. 'Listen to what I say, O Nakro. We have received an invitation to attend a marriage. It is from our sister named Dharma. She has asked us to perform the ceremony of mamera for her daughter Telsi. But I have never heard the name of Dharma.' Nakro too was puzzled, 'We never had a sister.' 'Let's ask Bhemo. Call him to the assembly,' said Arjhan. 'Bhemo is not around. He has ventured out. We better ask our mother,' said Nakro. They went to the palace of Kutma, the queen mother. *Khama!*





They went to the cloud-capped palace of Kutma.
They went to the cloud-capped palace of Kutma.
They arrived at their mother's palace of clouds.

They climbed the steps of Kutma's palace.
They climbed the steps of Kutma's palace.
Hurriedly, they ascended the stairs.

They arrived at the palace of clouds.
They arrived at the palace of clouds.
They climbed the stairs with hasty steps.

They bowed to their mother.
They bowed to their mother.
With folded hands they spoke to their mother.

'We would like to know the truth, O mother.
We would like to know the truth.
We have come to get an answer.'

'How many brothers are we, O mother?
How many brothers are we?
Tell us how many children you have?'

'I wonder why you ask such a question, O sons,' said Kutma.
'I wonder why ask such a question.
What has made you ask this question?'

'I have five sons.
I have five sons.
The whole world knows that I have five sons.'

'From where has this sister sprung?' asked Arjhan.





'From where has this sister sprung?
Don't conceal the truth from us, O mother.'

'The five of you and Avtar,' said Kutma.

'The five of you and Avtar.

I don't know anyone else in this world.'

'If we don't have a sister,' said Arjhan,

'If we don't have a sister,

Then who has sent us this invitation?'

'This letter is from Gorna Gadh.

This letter is from Gorna Gadh.

It is written by a woman named Dharma.'

'But I have not heard this name ever before.

But I have not heard this name ever before.

Better ask Bhemo if he knows somebody by this name,'

said Kutma.

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Arjhan said, 'We have received an invitation from Gorna Gadh. A woman called Dharma claims to be our sister. I have not heard this name before. Whose daughter is she? This is perplexing. Ill has been done in the world.' Nakro asked his mother over and again. 'I have five sons,' said Kutma. 'Besides the five of you, I know Kasma Avtar, the Lord of this Universe. I don't remember having any offspring other than the five of you. I never had a daughter. But we should better ask Bhemo. He is so unpredictable. He might know who Dharma is.' Arjhan and Nakro returned to the royal assembly. They were baffled by this mystery. They waited eagerly for Bhemo. *Khama!*





They saw Bhemo coming towards the court.
They saw Bhemo coming towards the court.
He was walking towards the court.

After being away for the whole day,
After being away for the whole day,
Bhemo came home in the evening.

His brothers called him aside.
His brothers called him aside.
'Listen to what we say, O brother,' said they.

'We have received an invitation, O brother.
We have received an invitation.
A sister of ours has sent it to us.'

Bhemo pondered for a while.
He pondered for a while.
He nodded his head.

'But do we have a sister?' asked Bhemo.
'But do we have a sister?
From where has this sister turned up?'

'Try to recollect, O Bhemo,' said Arjhan.
'Try to recollect.
You may have an adopted sister.'

'This letter is from a woman called Dharma.
It is from a woman called Dharma.
She lives at Gorna Gadh.'

The name stirred Bhemo's memory.
The name stirred Bhemo's memory.





He recollected the incident by the sea.

'While I was out grazing the elephants, O brother,
While I was out grazing the elephants,
I met her by the Ratnagar ocean.'

'I asked her to tie a thread around my wrist.
I asked her to tie a thread around my wrist.
I accepted her as my solemnly adopted sister.'

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Arjhan and Nakro returned to court. They waited for Bhemo to return. As the Sun declined behind the western hills and the parakeets flew back to their nests, people came back to the safety of their home and hearth. Ghosts and witches began to scour the town. Bhemo arrived late that day. Arjhan was waiting impatiently for him. As he saw Bhemo enter the town, he went to meet him. He stopped Bhemo at the crossroads. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Arjhan said, 'O mighty Bhemo, listen to what I say. Ill has been done in the world. We are perplexed. Tell me brother, how many siblings are we?' 'You seem to be speaking in riddles, O Arjhan,' said Bhemo, 'I am not good at figuring such puzzles. If you tell me I can consume mounds of food and haul a hillock from its place.' Arjhan replied, 'But this matter demands immediate attention. We need to put our heads together. A Brahman has come with an invitation. He has brought dyed grains of rice with him. He is awaiting our reply. A woman called Dharma has invited us to her daughter's marriage. The Brahman has come from Gorna Gadh.' *(Tambur) O maharaj!* Bhemo pondered for a while, 'This is puzzling. We never had a sister. Yes, but the name sounds familiar. I have a faint recollection.' He contemplated and said, 'When I had gone out with our elephants, I came across a miserable woman by that name. She was weeping inconsolably. I adopted her as my sister.'





She tied a thread around my wrist. I had promised that I would attend the wedding of her daughter. We'll have to go to Gorna Gadh to perform the mamera for her daughter. She does not have any brother by relation.' Thus spoke Bhemo. Behind every incident a dramatic design unfolds in time and the tale continues forever. *Khama!*

'I'll have to perform the ceremony of mamera, O brothers.
I'll have to perform the ceremony of mamera.
I must attend the wedding of Dharma's daughter,'
said Bhemo.

'I am bound by my word, O brothers.
I am bound by my word.
I can't go back on my word.'

(Tambur) O maharaj!

At the crack of dawn, Bhemo went to his mother's palace. He said to her, 'Listen to what I say, O mother. I had forgotten to tell you something important.' The mother and son conversed. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* 'I have something to say. But you should trust my word.' 'First, tell me what important matter is it that you wish to discuss. Unless you tell us, how will we know whether to trust your words or not, O Bhemo,' said Kutma. Bhemo said to his mother, 'Once when I was out grazing our elephants by the ocean, I met a grief-stricken woman. She had no one alive on her parents' side. In order to console her I adopted her as a sister by solemn oath. Do you see this thread, mother? She tied it around my wrist. She is Dharma from Gorna Gadh. She has a daughter called Telsi. She has arranged for Telsi's wedding but her sisters-in-law often slight her as she has no brother. She was weeping on that account. So I adopted her as my sister.' 'You are kind at heart, O Bhemo. You did the right thing.





I am a mother of five sons. Now I have a daughter, too,' replied Kutma. *Khama!*

Dhofa said to her mother-in-law,
She said to her mother-in-law,
'Listen to what I say.'

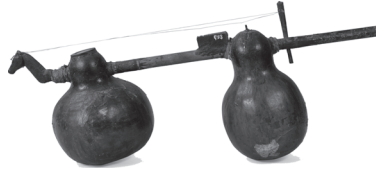
'Kaliyug has set in, O mother.
Kaliyug has set in.
We should leave for the Hemala.'⁶⁰

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Kutma said to Bhemo, 'Son, kaliyug has set in. This is not an auspicious sign. Let us forget about this ceremony of mamera and leave for the Hemala. Or else we'll be stuck in the mire of its ill effects and all our good deeds and virtues will go in vain. We need to leave this material world at the earliest and seek refuge in the pristine peaks of the Hemala.' Bhemo said, 'O mother, we can go to the Hemala later. But we can't go back on our commitment. And if we indeed have to trod upon the path of virtue, how will kaliyug affect us? We need not fear its ominous consequences. On the contrary, if it comes in my clutches, I'll strangle it for sure.' Dhofa said, 'Bhemo, this is not a time to delay. I had gone to the outskirts to answer the call of nature. I observed a golkhi settling on excrement. This is an unfailing sign of the advent of kaliyug. And mind you, however mighty you are, neither you nor anyone else in this world can stop kaliyug from taking root. None can escape its corrupt ways.' The three of them conversed in the palace of clouds for some time. They could not reach any conclusion. They got up and went to the court. *Khama!*

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THE ADVENT OF KALIYUG

(Tambur) O maharaj!

One day Kasna Avtar came to the court of the Pandavs. Green and yellow rugs were spread on the floor. Seated on tasseled rugs, they discussed various matters. Suddenly Avtar said, "There is no point sitting around here and talking about something we have not experienced. If we go out and move around in the town, we'll gather more information. I wish that Arjhan should venture out and walk along the banks of the lake." Arjhan pondered for a while, 'Avtar's suggestion can't be ignored. Even otherwise, I am itching for some action. If not anything else, I'll be able to stretch my legs and have a feel of life outside the bounds of this court.' Arjhan took leave of Avtar and went to the lake. He looked for the signs of Kaliyug.

(Tambur) O maharaj! Arjhan beheld a man coming in. He was carrying a young woman on his shoulder and an old lady was tied to his leg. Dragging along the old woman, he trudged in. The old woman was whining and cringing with pain. 'Who are you, O wayfarer?' asked Arjhan, 'And why are you carrying a woman younger in age on your shoulder and dragging along an old woman on the ground?' The stranger said, 'Don't you know me? I am Kaliyug. Times are changing and soon I'll be in sway. In the beginning, Dwaparyug prevailed. After that Satyug ruled this world. At present Tretayug is in power





but has reached its fag end. And now it's my turn to rule over the earth. I'm already here to take over.'

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! Arjhan said, 'Brother, it is alright that you have come on this earth, but who is perched on your shoulder and who's tied to your leg?' 'The one on the shoulder is my wife and the one whom I am dragging is my mother,' replied Kaliyug. 'Is it so, O Kaliyug?' asked Arjhan, 'But I can't comprehend this, why you are carrying your wife on your shoulder and not your mother?' 'My mother has had her day. Now her time is over. She need not have more attention. But one's consort deserves care and affection,' said Kaliyug. Arjhan pondered for a while, 'This is beyond my grasp. It is hard to comprehend.' He spoke aloud, 'What you say is incredible. If this is just the beginning, what will happen next? How will you fare? Tell me more about the forthcoming days. I am curious to know what the the plight of people will be under your influence.' Arjhan and Kaliyug conversed. Arjhan was eager to know more about the future of mankind. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! Kaliyug said, 'Listen to what I say, O Arjhan! I've arrived in this world. Now it is my turn to rule. I'll be the sovereign of the earth. Do you wish to know how I will fare? Then listen to me intently. During my reign two brothers born of the same mother will turn into enemies. One of them will flourish and roll in luxury, while the other will live a life of penury. The rich one will turn his back on the needy brother. Two brothers will be jealous of each other. A quarrel between a man and his wife will be considered usual. There will be enmity between sisters-in-law. And a sibling will refuse to talk to his own brother.' Arjhan sighed in disbelief. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! Kaliyug said, 'I'll enlighten you further, O Arjhan. Like amicability and harmony between siblings, many other things will undergo change. Salt will lose its saltiness and jaggery will be without sweetness. If you have patience to hear about the





consequences, I can cite a thousand such things.’ Arjhan nodded his head in disbelief. Kaliyug said, ‘A king will plough the field and an ascetic will become king. I’ve thought about everything. No sphere of life will be left untouched. A twelve-year old girl will mother a child, and without a shade of shame she’ll move around with her offspring. Cradles will hang on each hillock and tree owing to an explosion of population. Brother will turn against brother. People will not hesitate to slit the neck of a kinsman. Every eye will turn green with jealousy. Man will covet offsprings. He will take a vow to have a son, but when the son grows up and marries, he’ll refuse to take care of his aging parents. For the sake of land, for the sake of a woman, for the sake of money or jewellery, a father will have his son killed. And a son will not hesitate to murder his father.’ *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! Arjhan pondered for a while, ‘What a time that lies ahead!’ In the meantime, the mother of Kaliyug felt thirsty. ‘Give me some water, O son,’ said she. The daughter-in-law heard her mother-in-law asking for water. She too requested her husband to give her some water. A little water was left in the casket. Kaliyug preferred to quench the thirst of his wife. His mother was dying of thirst. Arjhan could not bear such delinquency. ‘Why didn’t you offer water to your old mother first? Can’t you see that she is dying of thirst?’ said he. Kaliyug retorted, ‘Well, I can afford to lose a mother but what shall I do if my wife leaves me? I’ll come across many a water reservoir on my way. My mother can have water there if she survives the strain of the journey.’ Arjhan and Kaliyug conversed a long while. When Kaliyug resumed his journey Arjhan raced back towards the city. He went straight to the royal assembly.

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! Kasna Avtar and the Pandav princes were engaged in conversation. Bhemo, showing the thread around his wrist, said, ‘Out of sympathy I have adopted a miserable woman as my sister. She has no brother of her own and we are a brood of five brothers but we do not have a sister. Her daughter, Telsi, is getting





married. She has invited us for the wedding. We must go to perform the mamera.' *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* The Pandavs said to their mother, 'What shall we do? Kaliyug has set in. Ill has been done in the world.' Kasma Avtar said, 'How do you know that Kaliyug is approaching? Do you have proof of its advent?' 'I have seen him coming,' said Arjhan, 'We should leave this place at the earliest. But we are invited to a wedding. We are bound by our word.' (*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Kutma said, 'Forget about the ceremony of mamera. Let's journey towards the Hemala.' *Khama! Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* The Pandav princes pondered for a while and said, 'Mother, we have performed many virtuous deeds. We succeeded in many of our exploits and at times we failed as well. We've worshipped Avtar with utmost faith. We have executed our duties appropriately but there is one thing we could never do. We could not perform a mamera as we never had a sister. Avtar has given us a chance to do so. We'll leave after performing the mamera.' (*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Kutma said again, 'O sons, you have accomplished many feats in life. Banish the idea of mamera from your minds and prepare to go to the Hemala. Pay heed to what I say. There is no time for delay. I can feel the breath of Kaliyug on my neck.' 'We can't disobey you, O mother. We have never done that. But we have never performed a mamera. And we won't have another chance of doing it.' 'I too wish to perform it, but Kaliyug is round the corner. If you insist we'll perform the mamera. But please act fast. There is no time for delay. Better collect all the necessary items for performing the mamera,' said Kutma. 'Please don't you worry about that, O mother,' said the Pandav princes, 'We do not have dearth of anything. Our treasury overflows with gold and jewellery. Just guide us in this matter. Name the gift and we'll put it aside for our sister.' *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Kutma pondered for a while and said, 'Bring





a few ornaments and some jewellery. Get some clothes of silk for your sister and a silk dhoti for her husband. Get some necklaces and anklets for your nieces and nephews. We must have something for them too. Make haste and get all these articles at the earliest. There is no time to delay.' (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The Pandavs did not waste a single moment. Hurriedly, they went to a goldsmith and ordered a variety of ornaments. They asked the goldsmith to make a necklace and anklets for their sister. They went to the cloth merchants and had silk garments stitched for their sister and her relatives. They returned to the royal court with the ornaments and clothes. *Khama!*

The Pandavs started collecting numerous gifts.

They started collecting numerous gifts.

They collected a variety of items for the mamera.

The Pandavs ordered necklaces and anklets.

They ordered necklaces and anklets.

They got anklets worth nine lakh rupees.

Kutma said to her sons,

Kutma said to her sons,

'Listen to what I say.'

'With the beating of drums, O sons,

With the beating of drums,

Let us proceed to Gorna Gadh.'

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*!

Kutma said to her sons, 'Listen to what I say. There is no time for delay. We have collected all the necessary items. We have gold ornaments and silk clothes for your sister. Make sure that we have not forgotten anything. Otherwise, Dharma's sisters-in-law will





assault her with sharp words. They'll mock us for the slightest mistake. Either we don't perform the ceremony of mamera or we conduct it in a manner that people will cite our example.' Kutma turned to Bhemo and said, 'Call the drummers. Announce the wedding by beating the drums. Ask the women of Asanapari to sing the customary songs. Tell the musicians to play their musical instruments. There is no time for delay.' (*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* Bhemo, Nakro and Sadev busied themselves to carry out their mother's instructions. They invited people for the wedding. Everyone got busy in making preparations for the mamera.

It was a time to celebrate.

It was a time to celebrate.

The entire town was in revelry.

Musical instruments were being played.

Musical instruments were being played.

The youth were busy buying combs.

Young women engaged in buying eye-salve.

Young women engaged in buying eye-salve.

The widows eagerly purchased snuff powder.

(*Tambur*) *O maharaj!*

Dyed grains of rice were distributed in Asanapari. Everyone was invited for the mamera ceremony. Asanapari was in a flurry of activity. The youth were busy buying combs. The girls applied eye-salve. The widows eagerly purchased snuff powder. Elderly men, twirling their bushy moustaches, strolled around the city. *Khama*. (*Tambur*) *O maharaj!* Kutma said to her sons, 'There is no time for delay. Send an invitation to nine lakh Goddesses. We need them to sing the customary songs at the time of the wedding.' Invitation was sent to





the Goddesses. The Goddesses adorned themselves in various ways. Singing customary songs they set out for Asanapari. People of the town gathered around to see the nine lakh Goddesses. The palaces of the Pandavs were in a flurry of activity. The musicians played their musical instruments. The dancers twirled around gleefully to their tunes. *Khama!* The Pandavs adorned themselves in various ways. They arrayed themselves in a groom's finery. Even the rising Sun looked pale in their presence. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* The Pandavs were the first living Gods who walked on the surface of this earth. They were the tigers of the land. Their large, dark eyes shone brightly. The tips of their twirled, bushy moustaches touched the corners of their eyes. The earth trembled under their feet. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! The Pandavs set out with pomp and splendour. They arrived at the outskirts of Gorna Gadh. Kutma said to her sons, 'We have arrived here in great numbers. But before entering the town we should better see your sister's attitude towards us. Will she extend us a hearty welcome or will she be perplexed to see so many guests? First, I'll go to her place and see for myself. Wait here till I come back. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Kutma thought of trying Dharma before entering the town. 'Let me see whether this woman is worthy of being my sons' sister?' thought she. She took the guise of a sweeper. In torn and tattered clothes she clad herself. In one hand she took a frayed cloth bag and in the other she held an old stick. Wobbling on her feet, she took the path to Dharma's home. She walked towards Dharma's house. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! Gorna Gadh was a busy place. Much revelry was going on. Musical instruments were being played. The dancers twirled joyfully. In the guise of a sweeper woman, Kutma arrived at Manek Chawk. The people of the town said to her, 'From where have you come, O old woman? And where are you headed





for?’ *Khama!* May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* The people of Gorna Gadh beheld an old woman at the crossroad. ‘She is an outsider,’ said they. ‘This woman does not belong to our town.’ ‘Where have you come from?’ they asked her. The old woman replied, ‘I am from Asanapari. The Pandavs are coming with the mamera for Dharma’s daughter. They have sent me ahead to sweep the lanes and alleyways of Gorna Gadh. But I found the streets of your town clean and washed. I thought of presenting Dharma a gift before leaving for Asanapari. I want to give her a piece of cloth. Will someone please call her here?’ *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Kutma, the queen mother, disguised as a sweeper woman. She held a walking stick and a piece of cloth in her hand. She asked the people of Gorna Gadh the way to Dharma’s place. She asked them to call Dharma. ‘An old woman of Asanapari wants to see you,’ said they to Dharma. *Khama!* On hearing the name ‘Asanapari’, Dharma became alert. She sprang to her feet and raced to the crossroads to receive the guest from her brother’s town. Kutma saw Dharma coming towards her. She wrapped the piece of cloth around her stick and stretched it towards her. She said, ‘I have come from Asanapari. Your brothers sent me ahead of them. They asked me to see if the streets of your town are swept clean. I was supposed to sweep the dust and dirt away before their arrival. But I found that the lanes and crossroads of Gorna Gadh are clean and free of dirt. Then I thought of making a small gift to you. I want to present you a piece of cloth for your blouse. Your brothers are men of repute. They’ll shower you with gold and silver. But I’ll feel obliged if you accept this small gift from a sweeper woman.’ *Khama!* Dharma was overwhelmed to see someone from her brothers’ town. She took a step forward to embrace the old woman. As she advanced towards her the old woman drew back. ‘Why do you move away from me, mother? First let me hold you in my arms as you belong to my





brothers' town. Only then will I accept your gift.' *Khama! Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* As Dharma advanced to embrace the woman in her arms she stood back and said, 'O daughter, I'm a sweeper woman. You'll be defiled if you touch me. Keep away from me. Accept this humble gift of cloth and oblige me.' Dharma said, 'Your will to give a gift is greater than your gift. I won't accept your gift unless you let me take you in my embrace.' Saying thus, Dharma took a step forward. 'No, please don't venture any closer or you'll be defiled,' said the sweeper woman. *Khama!* But Dharma didn't pay heed. She stepped forward and took the woman in her arms. 'Even a dog from my brothers' town is dear to me. You are a human being. Let me hug you, O mother, how can the touch of a human being be defiling?' said she. *Khama!* (*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Then Kutma, the queen mother, revealed her true identity. 'I had come to see whether you are worthy of my sons' affection. I had doubts but you have proved me wrong, I am happy that my sons have a sister like you. My Bhemo has not faltered in his selection of a sister.' *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Kutma revealed her true identity. She said to Dharma, 'Listen to what I say, O daughter. Send a wise Brahman to the outskirts. The Pandavs have halted on the outskirts of your town. Instruct the Brahman to ask your brothers whether they have arrived with every thing needed for a mamera. If they have brought every single thing they should enter the city of Gorna Gadh, otherwise they must be turned back to Asanapari.' Dharma pondered for a while. She said, 'Mother, how can I convey such a message to my brothers? I really don't expect any expensive gifts from them. What I need is their warmth and affection. They have honoured my invitation. Their presence is more valuable to me than gold and silver jewellery. How can I ask them to go away?' Kutma said again, 'Daughter, I implore you to listen to what I say. Tell the Brahman to ask them whether they have come with all the necessary items for





the mamera. Tell the Brahman to be very specific with his question. He should ask the Pandavs if they have come well prepared. If they have not brought the sapli sari as requested by you they should trace back their steps to Asanapari.' *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Dharma was not a real sister of the Pandavs. 'How can an adopted sister demand something with such authority? How can she insist on something so adamantly?' thought Dharma. She wept and wailed. 'I never had any brothers. Bhemo was kind enough to make me his sister. How can I ask for expensive gifts? But Kutma insists on demanding a sapli sari.' Dharma was in a dilemma. She summoned a wise Brahman. She instructed him to inquire if the Pandavs had brought a sapli sari. Kutma, meanwhile, returned to the outskirts of the town. *Khama!* (*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Kutma went back after meeting Dharma. She said to her sons, 'You are fortunate. Your sister is a caring and virtuous person. In the guise of an old crone I paid her a visit. But I'm convinced that she is worthy of our relationship. Bhemo, I appreciate your thoughtfulness in adopting her as your sister.' While they were conversing, a Brahman of Gorna Gadh arrived. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* The Brahman greeted the Pandavs with respect and said, 'I have come with a message from your sister.' He handed her letter to the Pandav princes. Arjhan read it aloud, 'Accept my greetings, O brothers. You are the first living Gods of this world. The others are mortal beings. Earth quivers under your mighty feet. You are the benefactors of the poor. You are generous to honour my invitation. I am your adopted sister. I do not expect maunds of gold and silver in the mamera. But don't forget to bring a sapli sari for me. Without that your mamera will remain incomplete. If you have not brought a sapli sari kindly return to Asanapari.' The heads of the five Pandav brothers drooped. *Khama!*





The heads of the Pandav brothers,
The heads of the Pandav brothers,
Drooped with embarrassment.

They had brought maunds of silver and gold.
They had brought maunds of silver and gold.
But they had forgotten the sapli sari.

(An accompanist: The value of their gold was less than a base metal. The lead singer: *Khama!*)

The Pandavs pondered for a while.
They pondered for a while.
'Without the sapli sari our mamera will remain incomplete.'

'From where can we get the sapli sari?
From where can we get the sapli sari?
In which part of the world do they weave such saris?'

The Pandavs went to Kutma with folded hands.
They went to Kutma with folded hands.
They prostrated at their mother's feet.

'Where should we go to get the sapli sari, O mother?
Where should we go to get the sapli sari?
Tell us from where to procure it?'

'Forgive us for our arrogance, O mother.
Forgive us for our arrogance,
Guide us in this matter,' said they.

'Listen to what I say, O sons,' said Kutma.
'Listen to what I say.
You won't get the sapli sari on earth.'





(Tambur) O maharaj!

Crestfallen, the Pandavs hung their heads in shame. 'Ill has been done in the world,' said they, 'From where shall we get the sapli sari? We have brought a cart load of fine silk clothes. We have got jewellery made of silver and gold but everything comes to naught if we fail to procure a sapli sari.' Dejected and disappointed, they sat on the ground. They were stranded on the outskirts of Gorna Gadh. They pondered for a while. 'We can't return without performing the mamera. But how do we accomplish it without the sapli sari?' They went to their mother with folded hands. They bowed to her with utmost humility and said, 'Mother, please help us out of this mire. From where can we get a sapli sari? In which country is it made? In which market is it sold?' Kutma said, 'Didn't I tell you not to aspire to perform this mamera ceremony during the Kaliyug? But you did not pay any heed. Did I not tell you to remember to get all the desired items for the mamera? But in your haste you did not care to read your sister's letter. Now if you return from here without performing the mamera, the people of Gorna Gadh will feel sad. It is not wise to aim to accomplish every single feat in this difficult time of Kaliyug. But who'd care to listen to an old mother? Now that you are here to perform the mamera, you must fulfil the desire of your sister. The sapli sari is not sold in any market. It is not woven on the face of this earth. To get it you must go to the netherworld. It is available only in the land of the snakes.' *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! 'It is available only in the netherworld.' The words of their mother evoked a feeling of awe among the Pandav princes. 'Ill has been done in the world. Who'll go to the netherworld to get a sari?' The Pandav brothers nodded their heads. They looked meaningfully at Arjhan. *Khama!*

(Tambur) O maharaj! The four Pandavs looked at Arjhan. 'O Arjhan,' said they in unison, 'You have been to paataal. You are familiar with





the way to the netherworld. We have never been there. We may get lost on the way. Moreover, the perils of the netherworld are unknown to us. We can't accomplish this task. Why don't you go there once again and bring this much coveted sapli sari for our sister?' 'I have not explored the whole of the netherworld,' said Arjhan, 'I don't know in which part of paataal I can get the sari.' Once again the Pandavs sought their mother's advice. 'To which part of the paataal should we go?' asked they. *Khama! (Tambur) O maharaj!*

Kutma said, 'Why do you look so apprehensive, O Arjhan? You need not move hither and thither in the netherworld. Go straight to Hirapath. She'll give you the sari. As soon as you get it, leave immediately for the land of the mortals.'

(Tambur) O maharaj! Arjhan yoked his bullocks to a decorated carriage. He urged his bullocks to make speed. Clouds of dust rose as they passed by. Arjhan arrived at paataal and he took the path familiar to him. He reached the Kanogar lake. He unyoked his bullocks and tied them to a tree. *Khama!* The netherworld was bustling. Arjhan heard the sounds of drums. Musical instruments were being played and the women were singing customary songs. The sound of gongs rented the air. The netherworld was in a flurry of activity. Arjhan pondered for a while. 'What is this revelry?' thought he.

(Tambur) O maharaj! Arjhan arrived in the netherworld. He went to Hirapath's abode. He walked through the streets and alleyways of the netherworld. The women were singing their customary songs and the entertainers were dancing and twirling gleefully. Arjhan reached the crossroads. *Khama! (Tambur) O maharaj!* Hirapath was sitting by the window. Word of Arjhan's arrival reached her. Hurriedly, she descended from her palace in the clouds. She raced to welcome Arjhan. Five and twenty maids held golden platters for their princess. Along with Hirapath they went to receive Arjhan. *(Tambur) O maharaj!* They met Arjhan at Manek Chawk. They greeted him with





affection. Hirapath scattered rice in the way of Arjhan. With lighted lamps she welcomed him. She bowed to him respectfully. Arjhan was ushered to the palace of clouds.

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! Hirapath led Arjhan to the palace of clouds. She laid a high couch for him. A silk mattress was spread over it. Hirapath and Arjhan talked about sweet and bitter events in their lives. Hirapath said to him, 'You've arrived at the right time. You must have started off the moment you received the invitation.' *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! Arjhan said, 'What is this revelry for? Why are people singing and dancing? I saw the dancers twirling on their feet. Is someone getting married?' Hirapath said, 'You are my spouse. I welcome you to my house. Our Nepji is getting married. We'll get him married with pomp and splendour. People are celebrating their prince's nuptials.' (*Tambur*) O maharaj! Hirapath told Arjhan about their son's wedding. 'I too have come here for a similar reason,' said Arjhan, 'I have not come to grace the occasion. I need something from the netherworld. Then I'll return to my people. I can't stay back for Nepji's marriage.' 'What is so important that you can't stay for your son's marriage? You should attend your son's wedding. But let's not quarrel over that matter. I am also busy preparing for Nepji's wedding. Tell me, what has brought you here?' said Hirapath. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O maharaj! Hirapath asked Arjhan the reason of his visit. Arjhan said, 'Hirapath, I'm happy that our son is getting married. I'll see if I can join the wedding procession. To whom are we getting him married? Where do we go for his nuptials?' 'We are going to Gorna Gadh. Nepji is marrying a girl called Telsi, the daughter of a woman called Dharma.' *Khama! Khama!* Arjhan was taken aback. 'Kaliyug is taking root indeed. Ill has been done in the world,' thought Arjhan. (*Tambur*) O maharaj! Arjhan pondered for a while, 'Alas! The influence of Kaliyug has pervaded the world. Even paataal is not free from its influence. My sister's daughter is destined to wed my son.'





How can I allow such a thing to happen?’ He turned to Hirapath and said, ‘Ill has been done in the world. Kaliyug has set in. We never had a sister. My brother Bhemo solemnly adopted a woman as his sister. Her daughter is getting married. We went to her place to perform the ceremony of mamera. She desired a sapli sari for herself. This is not found on earth. My brothers are awaiting my return at the outskirts of Gorna Gadh. And I have come here to get the sapli sari. But after coming here I came to know about our son’s nuptials. He is engaged to Telsi. She is the daughter of Dharma, our adopted sister. What kind of situation is this? Should we perform the mamera ceremony? Do we get our son married to our niece?’ *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Hirapath pondered for a while. ‘Ill has been done in the world,’ thought she. She said to Arjhan, ‘Even though we have always trodden the path of virtue, we are in dire straits now. Indeed, Satyug is coming to an end. The festivity has lost its glow and meaning. But Arjhan, you have come here to get the sapli sari. And sapli sari you’ll have.’ Hirapath gave her husband the sari. *Khama!* Taking the sari with him, Arjhan arrived at the Kanogar lake. He yoked his bullocks and urged them to move fast. His carriage travelled faster than lightning. Arjhan reached the land of mortals in a flash. *Khama!*

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj!* Arjhan came to his brothers. Gorna Gadh was bustling with activity. Musical instruments were being played. Womenfolk were singing the customary songs. People had amassed in great numbers on the outskirts. They were waiting for the mamera. Arjhan arrived at the outskirts. He met his mother. He spoke to his brothers. They gathered around Kasna Avtar. *Khama!* Arjhan said to Avtar, ‘Ill has been done in the world. I went to paataal to fetch a sapli sari. Paataal was busy with people singing songs and playing musical instruments. Hirapath’s son is getting married. Nepji is going to marry Telsi, our niece.’





(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Arjhan was agitated. ‘Nepji, Hirapath’s son, is getting married,’ said Arjhan, ‘He is engaged to Dharma’s daughter. On the one hand, our son is about to arrive in Gorna Gadh to get married to Telsi. On the other hand, Telsi’s mother is our adopted sister. How can our son be wedded to our niece? We are gripped in the clutches of Kaliyug. We were talking about the advent of kaliyug but before we could even think, we are in its grasp. Half of our bhakti and righteous deeds have vanished.’

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THE PANDAVS ON THEIR WAY TO THE HEMALA

(Tambur) O maharaj!

Kasna Avtar said to the Pandav brothers, 'Under the sway of Kaliyug, half your virtuous deeds have been rendered ineffective. But you have come here to perform the mamera. You must accomplish the task before leaving for the Hemala.' 'Lord, we wish you well,' said Arjhan, 'Eat, drink and prosper like never before, but don't insist that we stay here anymore. We can feel Kaliyug's vicious presence. Righteous people will suffer under its sway. The virtuous will not be able to preserve their uprightness. We have trodden the path of virtue for a long time but all our credentials of uprightness are now at stake. It would be wise to leave this mundane world.' Avtar said, "But how will the world know that you had managed to bring the sapli sari for your sister? They'll say that the mighty Pandavs could not accomplish the mamera.' Arjhan brought out the sari.

(Tambur) O maharaj! Arjhan produced the sapli sari of the netherworld. All eyes were glued to it. It was weaved and embroidered with threads of gold. The rays of the rising Sun looked pale before it. The Pandavs displayed all the expensive gifts they had brought for their sister. They placed the sari atop the gifts but they could not claim credit for this feat. Yet, the people amassed to participate in the mamera started to disperse. All their efforts had gone unnoticed. *Khama!*





(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! The Pandavs felt dejected. They started off for the Hemala. A pall of world weariness eclipsed the festivity at Gorna Gadh. People dispersed even before the mamera ceremony was performed. The Pandavs decided to leave the mundane world behind. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends.

The Pandavs pondered for a while.

They pondered for a while.

'The signs of Kaliyug are becoming evident.'

'Listen to what we say, O Kasma Avtar,' said they.

'Listen to what we say,

There is no time for delay.'

(An accompanist: It is time to take your leave. The lead singer: *Khama!*)

'May you eat, drink and prosper forever.

May you eat, drink and prosper forever.

May you rule justly over your kingdom, O Kasma Avtar,'
said they.

'The distance between you and us increases everyday.

The distance between you and us increases everyday.

Owing to Kaliyug, we'll be separated, O Lord.'

'The strength of our virtue is diminishing with

each passing day.

The strength of our virtue is diminishing with

each passing day.

We must go away to the Hemala, O Lord.'

'Listen to what I say, O Pandavs,' said Kasma Avtar.

'Listen to what I say,





Your virtues will accompany you on your journey.'

'Your virtuous deeds will see you through.

Your virtuous deeds will see you through.

The moment of departure has come, O Pandavs,' said Avtar.

The Pandavs set out for the Hemala.

They set out for the Hemala.

Along with their mother Kutma they set out.

The Pandavs ascended the pristine peaks of the Hemala.

They ascended the pristine peaks of the Hemala.

They started climbing the Hemala.

In a short while Kutma fell on the ground.

In a short while Kutma fell on the ground.

The five brothers watched her fall in agony.

Mother and her sons were separated.

Mother and her sons were separated.

'Continue to proceed on the path of renunciation,'

said Kutma.

Nakro was the next to fall.

Nakro was the next to fall.

His four brothers advanced with heavy hearts.

Jeevta! Bhalai!

(Tambur) O maharaj!

The five Pandav brothers, along with Kutma and Dhofa, decided to put behind worldly matters such as the mamera behind them. They said to Kasna Avtar, 'The time has come for us to take leave. We have





resolved to retire from the world to earn merit. Kaliyug is gaining strength with each passing moment. We want to follow the path of renunciation. O Kasma Avtar, we must bid you farewell. May you eat, drink and prosper forever.' The Pandavs, along with Kasma and Dhofa, set out on a journey to the Hemala. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Only righteous deeds accompany one on the final journey. The Pandavs started ascending the peaks of the Hemala. *Khama*! Bhemo's toes were beaten by frost. He cried out in pain, 'O brothers, I cannot walk any more. My toes are causing me great pain.' Frost claimed Bhemo's body. He fell to the ground. Beholding his fall, Jethodar said, 'O brothers, only virtuous deeds remain with us to the end.' The Pandavs watched for a while as the mighty Bhemo perished, then resumed their journey. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Leaving Bhemo behind, they proceeded further. In a short while, Dhofa succumbed to frost. Nakro was the next to fall. One after the other, all the Pandav princes were released from the burden of the flesh. Only Jethodar, the son of Dharma, survived.

(*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Jethodar toiled up the path till he reached the heavenly abode of God. The other Pandav brothers had perished on their way. Jethodar made his way into Vaikunthpuri. (*Tambur*) O *maharaj*! Jethodar arrived in Vaikunthpuri and united with Kasma Avtar. May you be well, O *honkaria*. Life is short but the tale never ends. The tale of the Pandavs comes to an end but it will survive time. We may narrate it again if we remain hale and hearty. May you prosper, O listeners! Listening to such tales brings good fortune. Those who are released from the burden of the flesh are fortunate. May those, who still walk on the earth in flesh and blood, be happy and prosper. May you, recording this tale, be happy and prosperous. The tale of the Pandavs ends here.

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NOTES

1. This is the Vedic-Puranic Indra. Indar is the king of the Gods, Indrani is his consort and Amrapuri is the capital of Indra's kingdom.
2. Satraja is Shantanu in the *Mahabharata*.
3. Gagiver is Gangeya of the *Mahabharata*.
4. Setar is Chitravirya of the *Mahabharata*
5. Visetar is Vichitravirya of the *Mahabharata*.
6. In the verse version of this episode Satraja entrusts the girl child to an ascetic called Gargar. Compare pp. 133, 149 of Bhagwandas Patel, *Bhilo nu Bharath*.
7. Kasna Avtar or Avtar is Krishna.
8. Asanapari is Hastinapur of the *Mahabharata*.
9. Andh Raja is Dhritrashtra of the *Mahabharata*.
10. Gatarpa is Gandhari of the *Mahabharata*.
11. Kutma is Kunti of the *Mahabharata*.





12. This indicates the refrain of a song. It appears at the end of each subsequent line, forming a similar pattern.
13. Indicates refrain of a song, appearing at the end of each stanza, forming a similar pattern.
14. This seems to be a slip of tongue on the part of the narrator. Satraja had killed three sons and the baby girl was his fourth child. But the narrator has mentioned here four sons.
15. Sav Sakti means Shiva Shakti or Adi Shakti.
16. The character of Kiran Kunvar, also mentioned as Karan, is Karna of the *Mahabharata*.
17. As a verse ends, the lead singer plucks the strings of his tambur, a few times. Prose narration then commences.
18. 'O maharaj!' is an address, meaning something like 'O sir!' The latter is anyone, a listener or in this case, the reader.
19. Jethodar is Yudhisthira of the *Mahabharata*.
20. Arjhan is Arjun of the *Mahabharata*.
21. Bhemjhal is Bhima of the *Mahabharata*.
22. Sadev is Sahdeva of the *Mahabharata*.
23. Nakro is Nakula in the *Mahabharata*.
24. Dhofa is Draupadi.
25. The character of Daljhojhan corresponds to Duryodhana of the *Mahabharata*.
26. Vasang is Vasuki, the serpent king.





27. Vennag is a bird.
28. Accompanists who respond to the lead singer at intervals.
29. A formulaic expression that is used at intervals.
30. A way of wishing the addressee to remain hale and hearty and safe from evil eye.
31. At times the accompanists interrupt the flow of the narration to prompt the lead singer about the subsequent happening or to bring him back to the ongoing event if they think that he has deviated.
32. These stanzas are sung in a different tone. Since such variations of vocalization cannot be carried into the print medium, it has been verbally exemplified in the original text. This translation is faithful to the source.
33. Literary meaning 'bravo', such expressions are used to encourage the singer or narrator.
34. The lead singer or narrator uses such expressions to encourage the accompanists as well as to create a bond between the narrator and his audience.
35. The narrator, at times, hints at a future event to create suspense.
36. In order to underline the urgency of collecting the material for the yagna, the following lines spoken by Kasna Avtar are recited at a quicker pace. Such variations cannot be carried into print, and so it has been verbally exemplified in Patel's *Bhilo nu Bharat*. This translation is faithful to the original text.
37. The voice now changes. The lead singer, in order to emphasize the concern of Arjhan's queen, sings in prolonged or lengthened syllables.





38. Kamru is Kamrup.
39. This particular line seems to be an interpolation as it does not show any direct bearing to the ongoing narration.
40. A section is omitted due to interpolation.
41. 'Tale of Hansdev' depicts the plight of a soul after death and is sung during funeral ceremonies.
42. Refers to a symbolic ladder believed to be used by the departed soul to ascend to heaven.
43. Kabiro is Dushashan.
44. Gharino Ghatukaro is Ghatotkacha of the *Mahabharata*.
45. Translation of a phatana has been omitted, however, the prose version covers the gist of the omitted part.
46. The couple of stanzas are sung in a different tone.
47. *Sakro Véd* can be paraphrased as *Chakr Véd*. In the Bhili context it is a text in which the art of warfare is discussed. It should not be confused with the four Vedas.
48. In oral narratives, the order of the episodes may change in the prose sections if it does not affect the central story-line. While Hodra is earlier introduced as a consort of Arjhan, here Lord Krishna goes to the Pandav princes with a request to marry his sister.
49. Balo Himmat or Balo is Abhimanyu of the *Mahabharata*.
50. Viyor Velaro is King Virat.
51. Antra, or Entra is Uttara.





52. Verath Nagri is Virat Nagar.
53. Some text is missing from the narration of this episode; however, the editor of the narrative has provided the details of the missing tale after discussing this episode with his informers. According to their version, Hodra transforms Sadev and Nakro into birds as no being on two legs could traverse the land of one-legged people. Facilitated by wings, the Pandav princes cross the stretch. From there, they reach a strange place where they are expected to travel upside down like bats. Finally, they reach the battlefield from where they should procure the Tower of Victory, essential to ensure victory in the great war of Bharath.
54. Refer to 'A Tale Never Ends' about the variations that may introduced by the narrator-singer.
55. There seems to be a discontinuity here. The missing part of this narration is narrated in its prose counterpart in the subsequent pages.
56. Kuria Khet is Kurukshetra.
57. This seems to be a meaningless phrase.
58. This is a variation in the print version. It seems to be a slip of mind on the part of the singer, as such minor variations are part of a long recital.
59. In the place of the word '*Khama!*', the use of the term '*Allah!*' merits our attention.
60. Also mentioned as *emala*, it is Himalaya.



GLOSSARY

aarti : a ceremony performed to worship an idol of a deity or a respectable person with lighted lamps in which, a dish holding lamps is moved in a series of circles in front of the idol or the person; a prayer or a song is sung at the time of performing an aarti.

bajri : millet, a kind of cereal

bania : an individual of a particular community, the members of which are generally traders; a person of merchant community.

bhabhi : a sister-in-law, wife of one's brother

Bhagwan: God

bhajan : a hymn, or a prayer pleading or praising God

bhakti : worship, devotion

bhasma kankan : a potent weapon emanating fire at its owner's command





Bij : the second day of any of the two lunar fortnights, the crescent of the moon seen on the second day of a lunar fortnights; considered to be an auspicious day among Dungri Bhils for performing religious rites

biro : a role of betel leaf. Here, thrusting one's hand at a biro means accepting the challenge of accomplishing a formidable task

ceremony of toran : a beginning of the wedding ritual proper in the Bhil community during which the bridegroom is required to touch the wreath of flowers hanging under the arch of the main gate of the bride's house. Also see *toran*.

chopat : a piece of cloth or a board on which the game of dice is played

chundadi : a length of cloth usually wrapped around the shoulders as an upper garment by women; also a piece of cloth offered to a Goddess as a mark of devotion

churmu : a sweetmeat prepared from wheat flour, jaggery and ghee on auspicious occasions as an offering to gods

crore : ten million

damru : a small two-headed pellet drum, shaped like an hourglass. The drum is typically made of wood, with a leather drum head. Its height ranges from a few inches to a little over a foot. It is played one handed. Typically, the strikers have beads fastened to the ends of leather cords around the waist of the damru. Knots in the leather can also be used as strikers. As the player waves the drum using a twisting wrist motion, the strikers beat on the drumhead. The damru is used by itinerant musicians due to its small size





dhaja : a holy flag

danav : a demon; arch enemy of the Gods

datan : peeled sleek stick of a particular tree, used for cleaning teeth

devar : brother-in-law, brother of one's husband

dhoti : a piece of cloth wrapped around the lower body by men, one end of which passes between the legs and is tucked in behind

dhuni : fire or a place where a sacred fire is lit and constantly kept burning by ascetics

gedi : a stick used for hitting a ball in the game of gedi-dado, an indigenous game

ghee : a kind of home made butter, used as a medium of cooking

ghughri : a kind of sweet

golkhi : a kind of fly

gugal : a kind of fragrant gum used for incense and as medicine

guru : a teacher, in the text it means a spiritual teacher

hindola : a broad swinging board or cot, hung inside one's house, usually in a family room or inner quarters

indhoni : a ring of cloth or other soft material which is placed on the head to carry load

javli : a flower-bearing plant, a fragrant flower by that name





jhasi : a flower-bearing plant, a fragrant flower by that name

jogini : female devotee or ascetic

jowar : a kind of seed-grain

kachriyu : a kind of sweet prepared from lumps of jaggery and crushed oil seeds; generally sesame seeds are used for its preparation

Kaliyug : the last among the four ages according to the Hindu cycle of recording time. The other ages are Satya Yug, Treta Yug and Dvapara Yug. The Kaliyug is traditionally thought to last 4,32,000 years. It is believed that human civilization degenerates spiritually during Kaliyug. It is also referred to as the Dark Age or an age of vice because people during this age become far removed from God

kaniyur : a tree

karma : act, deed, action; here it refers to deeds or conduct of one's past life

ketki : a fragrant flower

kumkum : red powder, usually made of red turmeric or vermillion, for applying on the forehead on auspicious occasions

laddus : a kind of round sweets

lakh : one hundred thousand, in traditional Indian reckoning

Maharaj: here it is used as an address, meaning 'sir'

malan : wife of a gardener





Malek : Lord

mali : gardener

mama : mother's brother

mamera : gifts conferred upon a girl by her parents or maternal uncle on her wedding or at the time of the seventh month of her first pregnancy

mann : forty seers in weight, maund

marva : a fragrant flower

Meru-Sumeru : mythological mountains

mindhol : a kind of fruit tied around the wrist of a bride or a groom on occasions as marriage; emetic nut

mogra : jasmine

odhani : a length of cloth used by women to cover the upper part of their body

pachhedi : a length of coarse cloth used by men for covering the upper part of their body

paisa : a hundred paisa making a rupee, a farthing

paataal : the netherworld

pat : a ritual also known as *Dhula no Pat*, practised by the members of the Mahamargi sect to express their gratitude towards their deity, Dhula





phatanas : an obscene or abusive song sung to jeer at the relatives of a bride or a bridegroom at the time of a wedding or on such other occasions

pithi : a fragrant yellow substance made of turmeric powder and other ingredients, anointed to the bride or bridegroom as part of a ceremony by the same name

prasad : propitiatory offering or gift, food or sweetmeat, made to God or to one's guru while performing a religious ceremony. The prasad is later distributed among the followers as a gift from the deity or the guru

Rabari : a nomadic community, a person of that community

rakhri : a thread tied around the wrist of a brother by one's sister as a protection against evil

rishi : an ascetic, a mendicant

rotla or rotlo : a kind of thick roti, usually made of millet or corn flour

samadhi : The term denotes higher levels of concentrated meditation, or *dhyan* in which the mediator loses one's identity and becomes one with the Supreme Being. It also refers to the intentional departure from the physical body at death as well as a burial chamber of a saint, or a spiritual leader. In the present context, it is used to refer to a structure or a shrine built in the honour of the mortal body of the deceased

Sanetaro or Shankhodwar yagna : Here, yagna is a religious ceremony. Sanetaro or Shankhodwar yagna is the last rite performed by one's male heir for the peace of the departed soul. Failure to do so may condemn the deceased to remain in hell. This





particular rite is prevalent even today among the Mahamargi sect

sangi dhol : a kind of drum

Satyug : *satya jug* or satyug, also known as Kritayug, is the first among the four ages consisting of 1,728,000 years. It is considered to be the Golden Age; the age of purity. Knowledge, meditation, and penance hold special importance in this era. Dharma or righteousness is said to be at the highest during this phase. It is believed that during satyug, all people engage only in good, sublime deeds. However, during this period evil enters this world and the very fabric of time begins to decay.

sapli sari : a sari made from the slough of snakes

sat : truth; virtue; strength acquired by leading a truthful and virtuous life

seer : a unit of weight, approximately 0.5 kg

satiya : an ardent and righteous follower of God, a person who never lies in one's life

shehnai : a musical instrument similar to a fife, usually played on auspicious occasions

shiya : a sacred grass used as an item of worship. The stem of this grass is not knotty and in certain religious ceremonies, a ladder is made by knotting and intertwining its stalks; by ascending this symbolic ladder, a departed soul is believed to climb its way to heaven.





sirkaliya : a kind of water sport

suvario : a fried snack made of wheat flour

tambur : a musical stringed instrument

toran : a wreath of flowers and leaves used for decorating the main entrance of one's home on festive occasions. Here, it refers to a wedding rite, in which the bride groom touches the toran with his sword, before entering the marriage pavilion

Vaikunthpuri : heavenly abode of Krishna

vennag : a bird

yagna : a ritual of sacrifice. The term also means worship, prayer, praise, offering, oblation or sacrifice. It is performed to please the gods or to attain certain wishes. In the present context, it denotes a religious rite performed during different stages of a person's life—from childhood to the final rite of death

yojan : a measure of distance, approximately four miles.

